

New England Agents and the English  
Atlantic, 1641-1666

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## Abstract

Colonial agents played a central role in the early relationship between England and the New England settlements. Agents' missions forced the colonies to devise a working definition of their political, legal and cultural status with regard to England. Agents secured charters and negotiated agreements which placed the colonies on a lasting constitutional base, both in transatlantic terms, and with respect to one another. The Rhode Island towns recognised at an early date that they needed English help if they were to resist annexation by the other colonies: that support was maintained by dispatching agents to successive English regimes.

This study uses evidence from both sides of the Atlantic, analysing both the agency as an institution, and its role in English Atlantic affairs. The first generation agents were better organised and more successful than students of later periods have allowed. As first generation settlers with close personal ties to England, the early agents also offer unique insights into the attitudes and concerns of colonials when faced with civil turmoil in their home country. In turn, England's leaders held views about the colonies which are revealed in their dealings with agents. The study of agents has therefore allowed many seemingly unrelated strands in transatlantic politics and society to be drawn together and examined in a wider context.



### Declaration of Authorship

I, the undersigned, in accordance with regulation 3.4.7 of the Postgraduate Study Programme, hereby declare that this thesis was composed by me, and that I am the sole author.

Graeme J Milne

for  
Mum and Dad

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## Preface

This study has its roots in a single question. How did Rhode Island, alone among the smaller settlements of southern New England, survive the seventeenth century without being incorporated into either Massachusetts or Connecticut? As is perhaps inevitable, the path from that question to this dissertation has involved a number of changes in focus, but the final product goes a long way to answering the initial question, as well as addressing several more.

It was clear from preliminary reading that Rhode Island was always more willing to cooperate with successive English governments than were the other colonies, and following this avenue of enquiry led to the first generation colonial agents. Their careers in turn revealed much about the relationship between England and the colonies, and not least the role of English authority in solving colonial disputes.

This thesis is based on research supervised in Edinburgh by Dr. Alan Day and Dr. Susan Hardman Moore. Their help and encouragement is much appreciated, as is that offered by their colleagues. In particular, Dr. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones coordinated my tutoring work for the History Department; Dr. Frances Dow introduced me to the historiography of seventeenth-century England; Mr. Owen Dudley Edwards offered some helpful criticism of a seminar paper based on the final chapters of this work; and Dr. Colin Nicholson made my study trips easier with some timely information. I am grateful to them all.

Most of my research and writing was carried out in Edinburgh, either at the University Library or the National Library of Scotland. A number of other institutions- in Scotland, England and the United States- provided me with research facilities and made their

resources available to me. Most are listed in the primary sources bibliography at the end of this dissertation, but others deserve thanks also: in particular, the Institute of Historical Research and Senate House Library (both of the University of London), Harvard's Widener Library and Brown's Rockefeller and John Carter Brown Libraries. The last of these gave me a travel grant which helped to make possible a three-month stay in New England, while the bulk of my research was funded by the Scottish Education Department. The final stages of writing took place during my tenure as Thorneycroft Fellow at Southampton University. I wish to thank my colleagues in the Official Publications Section of the Hartley Library for their interest and encouragement.

The adaptation of primary material for the purposes of this thesis involves the following standardisations. Spelling has been modernised in quotations from sources, except where there is no direct modern equivalent for a word, but no alteration has been made to spelling in the titles of seventeenth-century pamphlets: most of the latter have not been quoted to their original length, however. Dates have been left in the Julian calendar, as in the original sources, although the year is taken to begin on January 1 instead of March 25. Minor biographical details of agents in the main text have not been footnoted; source references are given in the biographical appendix.

Writers have long sought ways of apologising for errors and claiming full responsibility for them, and I hope I may be forgiven for adopting a personal favourite rather than producing anything original. Thomas Rotherham condemned the activities of radical preachers in his native Hertfordshire in *A Den of Theeves Discovered*, (London, 1643). On page 94, he added two brief lines of errata to his text before making the following plea: "There may be some other mistakes, which I know the ingenious reader will rather amend, than carp at."

## Abbreviations

<i>Commons Journals</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons.</i>
<i>Conn Rec</i>	J. Hammond Trumbull, ed. <i>The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut 1636-1776</i> . 15 vols. Hartford, CT 1850-1890.
<i>CSPC</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies.</i>
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series.</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>Force, Tracts</i>	Peter Force, <i>Tracts, and other Papers relating to...the Colonies in North America</i> . 4 vols, Washington, 1836-47
<i>Hazard, State Papers</i>	Ebenezer Hazard, <i>Historical Collections; Consisting the State Papers and other Authentic Documents</i> . 2 vols. 1792-4.
<i>HJ</i>	<i>The Historical Journal.</i>
<i>Hutchinson Papers</i>	Prince Society, <i>Hutchinson Papers</i> . 2 vols. Boston 1865. (repr. New York 1967).
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of American Studies.</i>
<i>JBritS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies.</i>
<i>Kavenagh, Foundations</i>	W. Keith Kavenagh, ed. <i>Foundations of Colonial America: A Documentary History</i> . 3 vols. New York 1973.
<i>LaFantasie, Correspondence</i>	Glenn W. LaFantasie, ed. <i>The Correspondence of Roger Williams</i> . 2 vols. Providence, RI 1988.
<i>Lords Journals</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Lords.</i>
<i>Mass Archives</i>	Microfilm Collection of Colony Records; Massachusetts State Archives, Boston.
<i>Mass Rec</i>	Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed. <i>Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England</i> . 5 vols. Boston, MA. 1853-4.
<i>MHS</i>	Massachusetts Historical Society.

NEGHR	<i>New England Historical and Genealogical Register</i>
NEQ	<i>New England Quarterly</i>
NH Rec	Charles J. Hoadly, ed. <i>Records of the Colony and Plantation of New Haven</i> . 2 vols. Hartford, CT 1857-8.
NYHS Collections	<i>Collections of the New York Historical Society</i>
Plymouth Rec	Pulsifier, David ed. <i>Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England</i> . 12 vols. Boston, MA 1855-1861.
PRO	Public Record Office.
Providence Rec	Horatio Rogers, ed. <i>Early Records of the Town of Providence</i> . 21 vols. Providence, RI 1892-1915.
Rawlinson MSS	<i>The Rawlinson Manuscripts in the Bodlean Library</i> . Harvester Press Microfilm Publications, 1984.
RIH	<i>Rhode Island History</i>
RI Rec	John R. Bartlett, ed. <i>Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations</i> . 10 vols. Providence, RI 1856-1862.
RIHS	Rhode Island Historical Society.
Stock, <i>Proceedings</i>	L.F. Stock, <i>Proceedings and Debates in British Parliaments Respecting North America 1542-1688</i> . 5 vols. Washington DC 1924.
Thurloe State Papers	Thomas Birch, ed. <i>A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe Esq.</i> 7 vols. London 1742.
Williams, <i>Writings</i>	Roger Williams, <i>The Complete Writings of Roger Williams</i> . 7 vols. New York 1963.
Winthrop Papers	Allyn B. Forbes, ed. <i>Winthrop Papers</i> . 5 vols. Boston, MA 1929-47.
Winthrop, <i>Journal</i>	James K. Hosmer, ed. <i>Winthrop's Journal "History of New England" 1630-1649</i> . 2 vols. New York 1908.
Winthrop MSS	Marjorie F. Gutheim, ed. Microfilm Edition of the Winthrop Papers. Boston, MA 1976.
WMQ	<i>William and Mary Quarterly</i> , 3rd series.



## Introduction

This study examines the careers of the first generation of colonial agents from New England, and their influence on successive governments in London. Agents provide the human factor in much early contact between fledgling colonies and the central authorities in England. The work of agents often remains in the background in more general studies of the colonies, but they were responsible for much transatlantic communication at a governmental level. It is in agents' work that the routine mechanics of presenting the colonial case in England can be seen. Of course, not all exchanges between colony and capital were transmitted via agents: the chapters below describe a range of instances in which agents were just part of a far larger network of contact at both official and personal level. Agents were nonetheless crucial to the major constitutional developments of the first decades of colonisation, and this study demonstrates that both the internal politics of New England and the structures of English colonial administration would have been slower to develop in the absence of agents.

In particular, agents were able to secure the constitutional position of Rhode Island. A major achievement, of fundamental long-term significance to New England as a whole, Rhode Island's survival in the face of threats from Massachusetts, Plymouth and Connecticut was engineered by agents who recognised the role English regimes could be encouraged to play in colonial affairs. To a large extent, the smaller colonies in New England were dependent on support from England if they were to resist the expansionism of their



neighbours, and that support was, more often than not, secured by the efforts of colonial agents.

Agents adopted many strategies and tactics in pursuit of their aims, and thanks to these multifarious activities they appear at various points in Atlantic historiography. In general terms, they were responsible for promoting and defending their colonies' interests in London. Sometimes they directly petitioned the authorities for specific decisions, or the granting of legal documents like charters: at other times they worked to defeat similar petitions of agents from rival colonies. Agents published pamphlets to support their claims, or to promote their colonies in more general terms. They tried, sometimes successfully, to raise funds for colonial causes such as education or religious conversion.

This opening chapter will introduce the various different sources and approaches used in drawing conclusions about the work of agents, and place this study in the wider context not only of agency historiography, but of other schools of research also. The fragmentation of historical study into a multitude of small specialisations is a matter of some importance to the profession as a whole, although given that historians are neither omniscient nor immortal some degree of specialisation would seem to be unavoidable. This study of colonial agents touches upon a range of issues which are far larger than the space accorded to them in these pages, because agents themselves lived in a wider world than many of their contemporaries. Accordingly, there is more material in the following chapters about English politics than might be found in most works of colonial history, and more analysis of internal New England affairs than is common in studies of English colonial and imperial policy. Focusing on agents allows many elements of the Atlantic scene to be studied, and their interaction analysed.

The first generation agents have attracted much

attention, either individually as subjects of biographies, or collectively in studies of the agency as an institution. As leading founders of the New England colonies, many agents have already been widely treated in biographical work: some have been studied at regular intervals since Cotton Mather compiled his *Magnalia Christi Americana* in 1702, and the resulting books run the full range from scholarly analysis to filiopietistic hagiography. The present study will not add much to the already well sketched biographical picture of many of the agents, but their role in transatlantic affairs does merit further consideration.<sup>1</sup>

Most studies of the colonial agency as an institution have focused on the eighteenth century rather than the seventeenth. Agents played an important role in the great crisis of the Atlantic empire which culminated in the revolt of the thirteen colonies. Michael G. Kammen and Jack M. Sosin have come to differing conclusions about the role of agents in the deteriorating transatlantic relationship of the later eighteenth century. Crudely, Kammen sees a gradual decline in agents' influence while Sosin argues for a more sudden breach in 1774.<sup>2</sup> An earlier imperial upheaval, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, is often taken as the point at which the institution of the colonial agency became formalised. Most students of the field have concentrated on the years from 1688 to 1776 as a period in which the agents were part of a mature,

1 The most important biographical sources- primary and secondary- for these individuals are listed in Appendix 4.

2 See Sosin, *Agents and Merchants: British Colonial Policy and the Origins of the American Revolution*, (1965); Kammen, review of same in *WMQ* 23 (1966):492-495; Kammen, *A Rope of Sand: The Colonial Agents, British Politics, and the American Revolution*, (1968).

well-defined system of transatlantic communication.<sup>1</sup>

This present study moves back in time to the first crisis to affect all of England's Atlantic settlements. Between 1641 and 1663, the New England colonies sent a total of fourteen men to England as agents. Between them, these agents witnessed two civil wars, the establishment of a republic and the ultimate restoration of the Stuart monarchy. No part of the English world escaped the political, military or economic consequences of these conflicts. The rebellion against Charles I forced many colonials, and particularly New Englanders, to reassess their attitudes toward their home country. Many returned to fight in the wars, and many more were grateful for having left England when they did.

The last examination of New England's first generation agents was produced by James J. Burns in 1935. In common with other regional studies, Burns devoted only a small part (one-sixth) of his monograph to the seventeenth century, preferring to deal with the eighteenth and particularly the period immediately preceding 1776. His discussion of the first generation is also limited by his extrapolation of eighteenth-century definitions into the earlier period. For example, if royal provinces suffered from tensions between governors and popular assemblies over the selection of agents, it does not follow, as Burns assumed, that the development of the agency in the supposedly more democratic chartered colonies of the seventeenth century was "smooth and undisturbed by factional disputes."<sup>2</sup>

More seriously, Burns underestimated the significance of agents in the early relationship between

1 Regional studies of the agency which use this time-span include Ella Lonn, *The Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies* (1945); Edward P. Lilly, *The Colonial Agents of New York and New Jersey*, (1936); James J. Burns, *The Colonial Agents of New England*, (1935).

2 Burns, *Colonial Agents*, 2.

England and the colonies. Burns' interest in the political and commercial lobbying activities of later agents led him to denigrate such issues as

the securing of charters and the defence of charter rights, boundary questions, complaints of religious minorities, requests for financial support for private and public purposes, and for trading privileges...<sup>1</sup>

As will be shown, these were in fact the very questions which had the greatest weight in the formative years of the English Atlantic, and agents were central to the airing of such matters before the English authorities.

It is worth briefly listing the agents and missions studied in the chapters below, in order to establish the chronological framework to the analysis which follows. Massachusetts dispatched the first mission of the period in 1641, when Thomas Weld, Hugh Peter and William Hibbins went to England. In 1643, Roger Williams became the first agent to represent the Rhode Island towns: he travelled largely on his own initiative but had the support of his own settlement at Providence and at least some of the colonists on Aquidneck Island.<sup>2</sup> The fourth Narragansett Bay town, Shawomet, joined the process when it sent Samuel Gorton, Randall Holden and John Greene to England in 1646. As will be seen, the Gortonists' main

1 Burns, *Colonial Agents*, 23.

2 Nomenclature can be hazardous when dealing with communities which changed over time, and anachronism is a problem in southern New England. The following conventions have been adopted for this study. 'Rhode Island' is used as a collective term for the four main settlements around Narragansett Bay, and is only used when referring to the general geographic area or in circumstances where all the towns can be treated as a unit. More usually in the mid-seventeenth century, towns acted independently or in pairs. Providence and Shawomet made up the mainland half of the colony, with Portsmouth and Newport being established on the island of Aquidneck. Shawomet was renamed Warwick in the 1640s, but to avoid confusion with the Earl of Warwick (the Long Parliament's Governor in Chief of the American Colonies) the town's Indian name has been used throughout. Appendix 1 below contains a map of the region.

purpose was to attack Massachusetts, and that colony responded by dispatching Edward Winslow to London late in 1646. Winslow was also charged with launching a preemptive strike against the Bay Colony's dissident Remonstrant faction, which sent William Vassall as agent early in 1647.

The next, smaller flurry of agency activity came in the early 1650s, after Aquidneck leader William Coddington secured a Governor's Commission from the English authorities in 1650. Coddington cannot be considered an agent, because he acted almost entirely on his own, and did not represent a colony or even a local community. Still, some of his actions do reveal experiences and lessons which had to be learned by agents also, and, more importantly, he came into conflict with long-serving Massachusetts agent Winslow. The most valuable evidence generated by the Coddington case comes from the agents sent to overthrow his commission. In 1651, Aquidneck and the mainland towns dispatched John Clarke and Roger Williams, respectively. These agents also clashed with Winslow.

The rest of the 1650s were quiet years for the colonial agency. Only one new mission was launched, when John Leveret replaced Edward Winslow for Massachusetts in 1655. Leveret served until 1660, and the second major wave of agency activity began in the following year. Connecticut sent the younger John Winthrop to London in the summer of 1661, and Massachusetts dispatched Simon Bradstreet and John Norton early in 1662. Rhode Island's John Clarke, inactive in England for much of the previous decade, was recommissioned in 1660 and clashed with Winthrop during 1662 and 1663. All of this last group of agents had returned to New England by 1664.

These men raised many questions in the course of their work, and became involved in issues which were of little consequence to most of their fellow colonists. As well as causing some tension at the time, when colonial leaders and agents found themselves having differing



perspectives, the wider activities of agents force historians to consider a range of issues. The rest of this introductory chapter will provide an overview of the major questions and fields of study which surround agency work in this period. In turn, these are the internal struggles and development of the New England colonies; the complex and fluid nature of English politics, society and colonial administration in a time of civil war and revolution; and recent attempts to view these matters in a wider context than has previously been the case, by considering the dominions of the Stuart kings in their full geographical extent.

First, the New England colonies. If early colonial agents have been neglected by historians, the same certainly cannot be said of these northern settlements. The region occupies a prominent place in the historiography of colonial America, which has only been partly balanced by an upsurge of interest in the southern and island colonies since the 1970s. Of the broad geographical areas into which the colonies are often divided, New England did not attract the most immigrants, nor was it the most economically productive in terms of the cash crop criteria of mercantile theory. Recent work argues that the New England settlements were not even the most faithful transplantations of English society, and that the fluid and transient structures of the southern colonies were in some respects closer to their English roots than were the ordered communities of Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup>

1 The most important call for New England's role to be reassessed is in Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture*, (1988). John Murrin criticises Greene's view that the Chesapeake was eventually to become much closer to English society than New England, arguing in particular that chattel slavery had an overwhelming impact on the nature of southern society. See Murrin, "The Irrelevance and Relevance of Colonial New England", *Reviews in American History*, 18 (1990): 177-184.

As a case study of the early decades of England's transatlantic society, however, the New England colonies offer some uniquely valuable lessons. Settlement in the region had a significant religious element: many if not most settlers had a wide range of reasons for travelling to America, but social structures before and after emigration demonstrate the prevalence of religious assumptions and habits.<sup>1</sup> Important in itself, New England's spiritual aspect took on dramatic new implications in the 1640s when the English Parliament seized power from Charles I. England's new leaders were no more united in questions of faith than they were certain of how to prosecute the conflict with the king, as the civil wars, political crises and religious debates of the decade were to demonstrate. Nonetheless, in the eyes of contemporaries and historians alike, the successes of the Parliamentary cause seemed to herald a potential transatlantic alliance between co-religionists.<sup>2</sup>

Assumptions made by both England and the colonies regarding each other's church practices and attitudes often coloured the transatlantic relationship, and New England agents offer some telling lessons in the obstacles confronting ecclesiastical agreement across the ocean. In general, religious questions were more

1 The balance between religious and economic motives for migration to New England has been the focus of much debate. The most recent flurry of writing on the issue stems from David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed*, which has been criticised by Virginia DeJohn Anderson, a long-standing advocate of the primacy of the religious motive. See the Forum discussion on Fischer's book in *WMQ*, 48 (1991): 224-308.

2 For example, Francis Bremer argues that New Englanders were closely supportive of England's "Congregational faction to which they were bound by old friendships as well as by a common ideology." See Bremer, "The New Haven Colony and Oliver Cromwell." *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 38 (1973): 65-72, 67. Much of this support fell short of the help some English leaders hoped for, however: for a more complete discussion, see Chapter 5 below.

likely to create tension than they were to promote cooperation and understanding. Agents were necessarily at the centre of such exchanges, and their role was placed in even higher relief by their own religious concerns. Half of the agents considered in this study had a professional religious role, either as Massachusetts ministers or as leaders of sectarian groups in Rhode Island. This involvement made it inevitable that the religious practices of the colonies would be held up to scrutiny in England, and that agents would be expected to defend their views.

Relations among the New England colonies are as revealing as their wider ties across the ocean, and again pose problems which were, if not unique to the region, certainly unusual in their intensity. While most of the emigrants of the 1630s went initially to Massachusetts, their reactions to the region's environment and to the social system adopted by the Massachusetts leadership led many to found other colonies. By the end of the 1630s a range of communities had developed as offshoots of Massachusetts, in addition to the settlement at Plymouth which had been in place since 1620. Most of these new townships had sufficient in common to gradually coalesce to form colonies, and most of the region's colonies in turn joined to create the Confederation of the United Colonies of New England in 1643. The one striking exception is the collection of communities around Narragansett Bay which ultimately became Rhode Island.

Rhode Island owes its foundation to the more dramatic disputes which rocked Massachusetts in the 1630s. Most of those who eventually settled in other New England colonies left Massachusetts voluntarily because they disliked the soil, or because they sought a more contemplative spiritual environment than the fast developing commercial ports of seaboard Massachusetts, but Rhode Island's founders generally travelled to their new homes under orders of banishment from the Boston



authorities. The Antinomian crisis of 1636-38 led to the settlement of Portsmouth which in turn divided to create the other Aquidneck town, Newport. Earlier, Providence had been founded by Massachusetts refugee Roger Williams after a dispute over separation from the Church of England. In 1642, the fourth Rhode Island town was established at Shawomet by the followers of Samuel Gorton. Most of Gorton's townsfolk had been banished from at least one of the other New England colonies.

Inevitably, therefore, Rhode Island had an unenviable reputation in the four surrounding colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth and New Haven. Rhode Island, it was alleged, welcomed escaped convicts from neighbouring colonies, tolerated drinking on the Sabbath, provided a bad example to the local Indians and was the vehicle for the dissemination of blasphemy and heresy throughout the region. Leading Rhode Island historian Carl Bridenbaugh sums up the traditional outsider's view of the colony as one of a "misgoverned, immoral, disjointed society of ignorant clowns harboring blasphemous religious opinions."<sup>1</sup>

The differences between the mainstream New England colonies and the place they called 'Rogue's Island' were in fact less marked than might be thought. Bridenbaugh's own studies indicate that the Aquidneck communities in particular were just as well organised economically as their larger neighbours. In religious terms, the Rhode Island towns practised an unprecedented level of toleration, and rejected the Bay Colony's practice of allowing civil magistrates to act against dissenting religious elements. This did not mean that Rhode Islanders placed any less value on civil order than did their neighbours, however. Equally, toleration did not lead to any dilution in the intensity of individual faiths. Rhode Islanders of whatever religion were as vehement in their beliefs as any in Massachusetts; they

<sup>1</sup> Carl Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton and Liberty of Conscience*, (1974), 127.

simply found it politically and socially expedient not to silence those who thought differently.

Other similarities in outlook and attitude, this time with regard to England, were central to the activities of agents. Rhode Islanders and their opponents alike recognised the power of chartered authority derived from England. Agents all made similar assumptions about their right to play whatever part they wished in England's own affairs, and did not share the view of some English commentators that the agents and their colonies were already acting on one level as outsiders. However much agents may have competed with one another they still worked with much the same set of assumptions, believing that English authority could help preserve their own rights and privileges, while diminishing those of their opponents.

There is one further, and very practical reason for concentrating on New England agents in this period. They are by far the largest group of agents from any geographical area, and while agents from other colonies appear occasionally in the following chapters, opposition to Parliament on the part of the southern colonies resulted in few missions from that region. New England agents therefore offer a unique insight into the transatlantic relationship between England and one of its major colonial offshoots, and provide a body of evidence which does not exist elsewhere.

The later chapters of this work draw much of their evidence from sources in England, and deal in some detail with the work of English committees and colonial administrators. While attempting to see English society in transatlantic terms, this study is nonetheless dependent on a range of evidence which by its nature only refers to one side of the ocean or the other. The period under analysis has been extensively studied by historians interested solely in the affairs of England, who have made little reference to the nature or even the

existence of American colonies. Given this, and taking note of the fact that the mid-seventeenth century is probably one of the most controversial periods in English history, some attention needs to be given to events in England.

One striking characteristic of the seventeenth century in England is the quantity of polemical, opinionated, abusive and insulting material which emerged from the printing presses of Royalists, Parliamentarians and innumerable other interested groups: it is a measure of the controversy still caused by these times that historians occasionally employ similar weapons. As with other hard-fought issues, some of the debate serves to obscure rather than reveal, and this is nowhere more true than in the labelling applied to events and to historiographical schools alike.

This study uses the relatively neutral term "interregnum" to describe the years between the flight of Charles I from London in 1642 and the restoration of the monarchy eighteen years later. There are alternative labels, which have become more or less fashionable over time, depending on the wider views of the historians concerned. Those who see the period as one of immense political and social change driven by vocal radicals refer to the English Revolution; those who see the more strict and fundamentalist wing of English protestantism as a central factor might prefer "Puritan Revolution"; interpreters of the 1640s as a baronial revolt might opt for the much older label of "Great Rebellion". Historians of the period are themselves slotted into categories by their colleagues, whether whig, marxist, revisionist or even, recently, post-revisionist. Small wonder that one scholar has found his analysis "hovering on the brink of terminological insanity."<sup>1</sup>

1 Glenn Burgess does much to clarify recent interpretations in "On Revisionism: An Analysis of Early Stuart Historiography in the 1970s and 1980s." *HJ* 33 (1990): 609-627, 616.

The terms historians attach to events and to each other might appear to be a somewhat trivial matter relative to the events themselves, but behind such academic conventions lie deep disagreements about the nature and development of English society in the seventeenth century. This present study examines English affairs in some detail when relevant to the careers of agents, but it cannot offer any major contribution to these wider debates. Nonetheless, evidence is presented in the following chapters which has a bearing on some specific matters of interest, and comment can be passed on questions which have attracted attention elsewhere.

One issue of particular concern to historians has been the question of factional or party divisions in the House of Commons. Agents had to direct their petitions to some of the main protagonists in Parliament, and the reaction of these men to colonial petitions can also reveal wider political allegiances and activities. Most recent comment owes a debt to J. H. Hexter, who overhauled the nineteenth-century picture of a House divided between conservative Presbyterians and radical Independents by uncovering evidence of a moderate third grouping and, more importantly, by arguing that most MPs owed no allegiance whatever to anything that would be recognisable as a modern political party.<sup>1</sup> A large number of historians have subsequently debated and refined Hexter's work, and built up a wider picture of the development of factions throughout the 1640s.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that alliances were fluid and often short-lived, that religious and political considerations overlapped,

1 See Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym*, (1941).

2 Stephen Foster summarised and challenged much of the 1960s work in "The Presbyterian Independents Exorcised: A Ghost Story for Historians." *Past and Present* 44 (1969): 52-75. Shortly after, two major monographs analysed the activities of MPs in detail with particular reference to those who went on to form the Rump Parliament: see David Underdown, *Pride's Purge; Politics in the Puritan Revolution*, (1971), Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament 1648-1653*, (1974).

and that the dramatic events of the decade forced men to adopt certain stances at certain times which could bear little relation to earlier or later behaviour.

The problems of trying to place individuals in parties or factions have beset many historians. In his study of the London churches in the interregnum, Tai Liu attempts to reach a conclusion about those civic leaders who were closely involved with the establishment of Presbyterian church government in their parishes but who carried on playing an active role following the victory of the army and the Independents in 1647-8. In Liu's words,

Were they truly religious Presbyterians? Or, should we call them political Presbyterians or political Independents? Or, to put it more bluntly, should we conclude that these names were meaningless labels and ought to be discarded in modern studies?<sup>1</sup>

Liu concludes that the classic factional divide between Presbyterians and Independents is on one level rather irrelevant, because most men had, in most situations, a higher loyalty which would overcome any consideration of faction. In this case, Liu argues that a general sense of civic responsibility united Presbyterians and Independents alike.

Evidence presented below indicates that a similar sense of priority coloured politicians' actions when dealing with colonial affairs. Chapter 6 examines in some detail the possible motives and concerns of England's leaders, and considers the claims of some writers that there were recognisable common interests between factions in England and colonial groups represented by agents. This study concludes that such links do not stand up to scrutiny: indeed, far from forming transatlantic alliances, England's leaders actively sought to distance themselves from the factional squabbling of the colonies. The main priority

1 See Tai Lui, *Puritan London*, (1986), 205.



of England's colonial administrators was stability, first in England and then in England's wider territories, and the internal disputes of the New England settlements were anathema to such a goal.

Closely tied to the issue of faction is the division between the two Houses of Parliament, and the role of members of the House of Lords in the politics of the 1640s has also been the source of some controversy. The early 1990s have witnessed a spirited debate among historians on both sides of the Atlantic based on articles written by J.S.A. Adamson and Mark A. Kishlansky. The first four rounds of the dispute, which appeared in the *Historical Journal* and the *Journal of British Studies*, are listed in the bibliography below: later contributions from other historians have littered the correspondence pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* and various newspapers. To do justice to all that here would be impossible, but, to summarise in extremely simplistic terms, Adamson sees the peers (and some individuals in particular) having a significant role in many of the most important political activities of the Long Parliament, while Kishlansky gives the Lords a much more subdued part relative to members of the Commons.

Given the minutiae of the arguments on both sides, this study cannot hope to shed much light on the wider role of peers in politics. It is notable, though, that members of the House of Lords played a crucial part in colonial administration during the 1640s. Chapter 6 presents evidence that peers remained active in colonial affairs until late in the decade, and beyond the point at which their influence is often believed to have declined. Perhaps more importantly, the decisions of Parliamentary leaders with respect to New England are entirely consistent with views expressed in earlier years by certain aristocratic colonial sponsors, and it is clear that these individuals were instrumental in steering the decisions of their colleagues.

One important point about those individuals who were prominent in Parliament in the 1640s is that they also supervised administrative processes in the absence of king and council. Government by the Long Parliament in the 1640s saw a gradual increase and development of Parliamentary powers, but far more sudden change was forced by the execution of Charles I and the establishment of the English republic in 1649. The Commonwealth period, from 1649-1653, has attracted the attention of historians for various reasons, not least a desire to find out if such a superficially dramatic shift was reinforced by any lasting changes beneath the surface. One unusual approach is that of G. E. Aylmer, who examines the bureaucratic structure of government in the period, offering detailed analysis of the trend toward government by committee and the increased use of professional officials.<sup>1</sup> Many others have looked at political development from another perspective, with studies of England's elected representatives. Work on the Rump Parliament by Blair Worden has already been mentioned, and the role of individuals in particular crises and events has been brought to light in more recent articles.<sup>2</sup> The idea of a Republican foreign policy has also attracted attention, along with the attendant development of English naval power. In particular, the circumstances surrounding the Anglo-Dutch war of 1652-54 cast light on the priorities and motives of the English leadership when confronted by commercial competition

1 See Aylmer, *The State's Servants: The Civil Service of the English Republic 1649-1660*, (1973).

2 See Worden, *The Rump Parliament*; reactions by certain politicians to events in Ireland are considered in Sarah Barber, "Irish Undercurrents to the Politics of April 1653." *Historical Research* 65 (1992): 315-335.

from the co-religionist Dutch.<sup>1</sup>

All of these questions affected the work of agents. Committee government, and the importance of certain individual committee members, dictated the approaches adopted by agents. The wider concerns of English leaders could frustrate agents pursuing a quick solution to problems, but they also allowed agents to identify figures likely to be sympathetic. The Dutch War is a useful example, in that Rhode Island agents were able to present their petitions in such a way as to appeal to those leaders with particular interest in the conflict.

If England's civil wars and republican experiments have attracted much attention from historians, it is only recently that the same could be said for the return of the monarchy in 1660. It is of course tempting for historians to see the Restoration as a convenient and even fitting conclusion to two decades of confusion and upheaval, and a variation on that sentiment among contemporaries goes part of the way to explaining why it came about in the first place. Nonetheless, some notable scholarship has demonstrated that the Restoration was not the foregone conclusion that hindsight implies, and that Charles II and his leading officials had to devote much effort to consolidating the return of the monarchy.<sup>2</sup>

1 There have been regular if infrequent contributions to the discussion of the Dutch war over the last few decades: see Charles Wilson, *Profit and Power: A Study of England and the Dutch Wars*, (1957); J. E. Farnell, "The Navigation Act of 1651, the First Dutch War, and the London Merchant Community." *Economic History Review* 16 (1963-4): 439-454; Simon Groenweld, "The English Civil Wars as a Cause of the First Anglo-Dutch War 1640-1652." *HJ* 30 (1987): 541-566. For a major contribution to the period's naval history, see B.S. Capp, *Cromwell's Navy: The Fleet and the English Revolution 1648-1660*, (1989).

2 Two important monographs published in the 1980s offer new evidence and analysis in this neglected period. See Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales 1658-1667*, (1985); Paul Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Restoration of the Old Regime, 1661-1667*, (1989).



That politics in the early 1660s was at times no less complex than in previous decades would not have been a surprise to the agents of the period, who enjoyed some success in their approaches to the new regime. Agents from the smaller New England colonies offered recognition of Charles II in exchange for new colonial charters, and while they may have allowed themselves to be manipulated by officials keen to isolate Massachusetts, the results were mutually beneficial.

This brief survey of the English side of the evidence has only scratched the surface of many important issues, but it is important to stress that just as England's troubles affected the lives of agents and other colonists, so the handling of colonial issues can reveal much about England itself. As well as this wider influence, agents also contributed to the development of mechanisms which were specifically designed to deal with colonial questions, and it is to colonial administration that the next section turns.

As has been noted, the organisation of government in this period resulted in a distinct overlap between the politics of England and the administration of England's colonies, in large part because the same men were prominent in both fields. There is even a continuity of personnel over time with many of the leading figures approached by agents in the 1640s remaining active on colonial committees into the following decade. There was, however, a sharp discontinuity of personnel between the 1630s and the 1640s, and this is particularly important because the same period saw little change in the New England leadership. Senior figures in the colonies had experienced some rather negative moves by royal officials during the first decade of settlement, and the resulting apprehension inevitably carried over into the interregnum. Regardless of the plans of the new Parliamentary leadership, the Bay Colony elite would have remained suspicious until all possibility of

interference from London had been removed. It is important, therefore, to briefly consider the events which were to colour some New England views of England throughout the early decades of settlement.

As will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 2, Massachusetts was always emphatic that it derived its authority from its 1629 charter, and its relations with successive English governments were conducted on that basis. Throughout the interregnum, the colony vehemently defended its charter and its right to choose its own leaders, even when there was little evidence that these issues were being threatened. Such concern, which at times verged on paranoia, stems in large part from the activities of the English government in the mid-1630s, and in particular the attempt by Archbishop William Laud to have the Massachusetts charter withdrawn.

To the leaders of the Bay Colony, Archbishop Laud was chief among those responsible for banishing English preachers from their parishes and depriving them of their licences to minister.<sup>1</sup> Most of the Bay clergy had either been formally censured before leaving England, or saw such a development as imminent, and Laud's elevation to the Archbishopric in 1633 seemed the final confirmation of England's fall into episcopal tyranny. It is understandable therefore that Massachusetts interpreted Laud's chairmanship of the Council for Foreign Plantations in 1634 as a direct threat to the colonial churches.

Laud, on the other hand, had reason to see the migration to America as a challenge to his authority. Once it had established its Congregational churches, Massachusetts Bay seemed to offer high profile opposition to Laud and Charles I on political and

1 For Laud's religious beliefs, see Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640*, (1987). The most recent biography of Laud focuses on his academic life and concludes that he was promoted far beyond his abilities as a church administrator. See Charles Carlton, *Archbishop William Laud*, (1987).

theological grounds alike. Earlier in his career, Charles had witnessed his father's attempts to deal with the problems of the Virginia Company. That company had threatened to ruin a flourishing trade in tobacco through corruption and incompetence, but the threat from Massachusetts in the 1630s seemed even more fundamental.

Massachusetts made no secret of its attempts to establish a purified church based on apostolic principle. Men like John Winthrop and John Cotton denied that their settlement was intent on separation from the English church, but their contemporaries had no doubt that the Congregational establishment in New England was very different from the forms favoured by Charles' Archbishop. While Laud attempted to reform the Church of England, Massachusetts took several steps backward, trying to recreate a more primitivist church which drew more inspiration from the Old Testament than the New.<sup>1</sup> Such a blatantly fundamentalist colony was the very antithesis of the gradually expanding power of the English monarchy in matters both spiritual and temporal. Charles and Laud broke new constitutional and administrative ground in their efforts to curb its activities. In 1634, Charles established a new Commission for Plantations, chaired by Laud. Laud's Commission claimed jurisdiction over all the colonies from 28 April 1634 until at least August 1641, but its one serious intervention in colonial affairs was the

1 A recent exploration of the roots of the colonial churches is offered by Theodore D. Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism*, (1988). An important part of Bozeman's thesis is a reconsideration of the "errand into the wilderness", which may have been less of a motive for migration than historians have believed. Bozeman argues that Perry Miller's classic works on New England theology have been misinterpreted and that it is dangerously anachronistic to assume that the first Massachusetts settlers were on a clearly defined 'errand'. See also Bozeman, "The Puritans' 'Errand into the Wilderness' Reconsidered", *NEQ* 59 (1986): 232-251.

attempt to recall the Massachusetts charter.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1634, the Privy Council took the first steps against Massachusetts, ordering that ships bound for the colony be prevented from sailing pending an examination of the charter. Many of those going to New England, noted the Council, were "known to be ill affected, and discontented, as well with the civil as ecclesiastical government", with the result that the region was already suffering "confusion and disorder...especially in point of religion".<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts was convinced that such actions, as well as the establishment of the new Commission, heralded a concerted effort to intervene in colonial affairs. The colonial rumour mill produced various stories at this time, including fears that a fleet carrying a new Governor to Virginia was in fact bound for Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup>

This particular threat proved to be a false alarm, and Stuart innovation in the governance of the colonies ground to a halt as domestic crises flared up in the later 1630s. In the years to come, Massachusetts demonstrated that it had learned two lessons from Laud's attack on the charter. Fears of a Governor being sent from England resurfaced continually throughout the interregnum and beyond, and were not restricted to the Bay Colony. Second, Massachusetts also realised that the English authorities gave New England matters a very low priority in the face of domestic troubles, and adopted a policy of trying to delay and obstruct developments in

1 Charles M. Andrews argues that the central motive for the establishment of Laud's commission was a desire to curb the activities of Massachusetts, and that the other colonies never held the same interest for Laud. See Andrews, *British Committees, Commissions and Councils of Trade and Plantations, 1622-1675*, (1908), 16. The document which established Laud's Commission is in Kavenagh, *Foundations*, 77-80.

2 Meeting of 21 February 1634, in *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial Series, 1613-1680*, 199.

3 Winthrop, *Journal*, I: 135.



the hope that England would be distracted from colonial questions.

The Bay's tactics might well have worked had the 1630s proved to be a model for later decades. However, while opposition to Massachusetts in the 1630s had come from the English authorities and from vocal individuals, the main thrust of criticism in the 1640s came from other colonies, and especially Rhode Island. An important consequence of this shift was that agents took a much more active role in setting the agenda for the colonial administrators of the interregnum. Agents could, and did, ensure that New England remained prominent before the relevant committees at times when individual English leaders had more pressing concerns, thus rendering the Bay Colony's chosen tactic less effective.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine agents' activities before the various committees and commissions of the interregnum and Restoration respectively. Colonial administration in this period has been studied before, and with some success, although no attempt has been made to produce a colonial version of G. E. Aylmer's comprehensive analysis of domestic administration.<sup>1</sup> Two much older studies of the mechanisms of colonial administration have recently been updated by some more widely-ranging monographs, although a detailed analysis of the role of individuals and committees in developing early imperial policy in all the Atlantic regions would be welcomed.<sup>2</sup> This present study demonstrates that New England agents had a complex relationship with

1 See Aylmer, *The King's Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I, 1625-1642*, (1961); also *The State's Servants*.

2 See Charles M. Andrews, *British Committees*; Percy L. Kaye, *English Colonial Administration Under Lord Clarendon 1660-1667*, (1905); Jack M. Sosin, *English America and the Restoration Monarchy of Charles II: Transatlantic Politics, Commerce and Kinship*, (1980); Robert M. Bliss, *Revolution and Empire: English Politics and the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century*, (1990).

administrators, and that a wide range of sometimes unexpected factors combined to influence the decision-making process.

Even in this brief introduction, it has become clear that events in England and the colonies need to be considered as part of one larger picture. At its broadest, this is a study of transatlantic politics and society, involving a variety of threads in what was already a complex web of transactions, migrations and communications. Despite the relatively short history of English colonial settlement in North America, the Atlantic was by the mid-seventeenth century a busy thoroughfare, and growing settlements of English colonists were to be found at various places around its rim. There was nothing automatic or inevitable about the place of the American colonies in the English body politic, and there is a danger that twentieth-century perceptions of these colonies may be coloured by hindsight: the subsequent importance of the United States does not necessarily mean that the original settlements were of any great significance to contemporaries. Evidence presented here indicates, however, that some parts of England's Atlantic sphere of influence were often prominent in the thinking of leading figures in London for a number of different reasons, and that the colonists themselves were capable of being far more vocal than their numbers and situation might suggest.

To stress that colonials had a place in English politics and that England's leaders had influence in colonial affairs is not particularly novel or surprising, but it needs to be stressed all the same. Historians have to set boundaries and parameters to what they study, and this present work is no exception. The danger is in setting boundaries which by their nature distort the material enclosed within. Perhaps the easiest way for this to be avoided is to reject

geographical and cultural boundaries which would have been incomprehensible to people living in the period under study. Thus in an age when the inhabitants of Boston, Massachusetts, considered themselves as English as their peers in Boston, Lincolnshire, it seems sensible to view both groups as component parts of a larger picture. This study demonstrates that many first generation colonials did not allow the Atlantic to separate them from England's politics and culture, and there is therefore no reason why historians should see the ocean as a barrier either.

The recognition of New England's place in the wider English world is becoming widespread thanks to some major studies published since the 1970s. Many of the most important of these have focused on the origins of those settlers who travelled to America, and the extent to which they maintained and adapted their English habits and traditions. David Grayson Allen has noted that "the conclusion that New England communities continued the laws and customs of old England would hardly seem arresting had not American historians argued to the contrary for the past eighty years."<sup>1</sup>

Allen's comment alludes to the work of many historians, not always students of the colonial period, who have seen in the colonies the roots of American exceptionalism. For various reasons such writers have sought to separate colonists from English influence from the very beginnings of settlement, and view migration as a clean break with few continuing transatlantic connections. There are in fact two issues here, although all have a common theme. First, there is the question of how much English culture survived the transatlantic voyage, and whether colonists transferred their existing societies more or less intact to America. Second is the issue of persistent Englishness: did settlers maintain

1 Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferral of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century*, (1981), 4.

ties with England and continue to have a recognisably English society for decades to come, or did they rapidly diverge from England in their social and political practices?

Much work remains to be done on colonial attitudes to England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but recent studies have contributed to a model of the English Atlantic which will help such further investigations. One reviewer has commented that early Americanists now consider themselves liberated from the demands of patriotism and free to consider the colonial period without having the weighty hindsight offered by the later development of the continent on their shoulders.<sup>1</sup> Historians from other countries might never have suffered that problem with regard to early European America, but they doubtless had limits on their own horizons caused by viewing the world from an imperial perspective. Both groups may now be capable of seeing the English Atlantic as "a transatlantic community in which central and local forces, events both in England and in the American colonies, interacted."<sup>2</sup>

Placing the colonies in a wider context might be seen as a revival of the old "imperial school" of historiography, but there are significant differences, not least in the amount and nature of evidence unearthed in the last few decades. Historians of the imperial school examined the political origins and structures of the colonies, placing much emphasis on a whiggish view of gradual European expansion and progress in the New World. Chief among such historians was Charles McLean Andrews, who described the westward expansion of English society and the beginnings of an organised Atlantic empire in a four-volume work which served for some

1 See Joyce Appleby, "A Different Kind of Independence: The Postwar Restructuring of the Historical Study of Early America" *WMQ* 50 (1993): 245-267.

2 Such is the objective expressed in Sosin, *English America and the Restoration Monarchy of Charles II*, 1.



decades as the bible of colonial American studies. Andrews developed some of the themes previously identified by Herbert Osgood, but brought to the subject an unprecedented knowledge of English sources. George Louis Beer's work from the same period focused on trade and commerce in the framework of an evolving mercantile empire. While the label 'imperial' has been criticised for its false implication that these authors ignored the internal development of the colonies, administrative and commercial questions were paramount to this generation of historians.<sup>1</sup>

Even as Andrews wrote, though, some historians believed that a shift in focus was necessary. Samuel Eliot Morison praised Andrews' work as "the last word on the institutional aspect of colonial settlements", but argued that the field should now hear more from social historians.<sup>2</sup> Morison's hopes had to wait: for thirty years after Andrews' work colonial history rarely developed beyond what one reviewer calls "an attenuated prelude to the American revolution".<sup>3</sup> In the later 1960s, however, there emerged a new school of research in the period. Individual towns and settlements were examined and issues such as family relations and social organisation became more important than imperial

1 See Andrews, *The Colonial Period in American History*, 4 vols (1934-38); Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols, (1904); Beer, *The Origins of the British Colonial System 1578-1660*, (1933) and *The Commercial Policy of England Toward the American Colonies*, (1948). For an assessment of Andrews' career and a discussion of the development of the 'imperial school', see Richard R. Johnson, "Charles McLean Andrews and the Invention of American Colonial History." *WMQ* 43 (1986): 519-541.

2 Morison, review of Andrews, *Colonial Period in American History*, vol 1, in *NEQ* 7 (1934): 729-732.

3 Nicholas Canny, "The British Atlantic World: Working Toward a Definition" *Historical Journal* 32 (1990): 479-497.

structures.<sup>1</sup> During the 1970s, studies emerged of cultural groups who had been largely ignored by earlier historians: Indians, African slaves and indentured servants were revealed to have played a significant role in the development of the colonies.<sup>2</sup>

The latest phase of work in colonial America can therefore be seen as an attempt to place detailed examinations of the political and social life of the colonies in the wider context of a transatlantic culture, thus combining the most fruitful elements of earlier approaches. The most influential of recent contributions to the field comes from David Hackett Fischer, who combines detailed studies of pre-migration England with the early years of settlement in four regions of colonial America. His work is a comprehensive synthesis of transatlantic evidence.<sup>3</sup> Others have focused on particular aspects of the wider English society, whether in religion and church organisation, trade and commerce, migration from one part of the Atlantic rim to another, or the development of communications.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the transatlantic nature of English society has always been recognised by some writers. Those concentrating on individual members of the first

1 Darrett B. Rutman surveys the numerous studies of individual towns in "Assessing the Little Communities of Early America." *WMQ* 43 (1986): 163-178.

2 For example, two pioneering studies of previously 'invisible' aspects of colonial America are Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*, (1975); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism and the Cant of Conquest*, (1975).

3 Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, (1989). Some of Fischer's critics were given a platform in "Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America- A Symposium." *WMQ* 48 (1991): 224-308.

4 One valuable historiographical survey of these themes, which goes far beyond the geographical limits suggested by its title, is Ian K. Steele, "Empire of Migrants and Consumers: Some Current Atlantic Approaches to the History of Colonial Virginia" *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 99 (1991): 487-512.

generation realised that many colonists were either unwilling or unable to separate themselves from the affairs of their home country. Merchants had to maintain trading contacts, religious enthusiasts kept in touch with supporters and opponents alike, and men of science and letters did not allow the Atlantic to come between them and their peers throughout Europe.<sup>1</sup> Historians of religion considered the New England congregations in the context of the English church, and a study of the first great American religious schism opened up a new interpretive framework by looking at the regional English origins of the leading protagonists.<sup>2</sup>

Crucial as colonists' origins were, it is their continuing relationship with their home country that forms the framework for this study. It is important to stress that the New England colonies maintained a range of contacts with England, that colonial institutions were affected both willingly and reluctantly by developments in the home country, and that many individuals crossed the Atlantic on numerous occasions for a range of economic, political, official and personal purposes.

The realisation that many people had transatlantic careers, and that this phenomenon was by no means restricted to the first generation, has led some historians to consider the rate at which English and other settlers came to think of themselves as 'American'. This is understandably a point of some contention. One recent analysis concludes that "it took a long time, at least a generation, for [the New England

1 Examples of such work- all from the 'gap' in Atlantic studies in the mid-20th century- include Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, (1955); Raymond P. Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peter 1598-1660*, (1954); Richard S. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees: The Winthrop Dynasty of New England, 1630-1717*, (1962).

2 See Emery Battis, *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony*, (1962).

settlers] to become in any intelligible sense Americans", and that the "transformation was never quite completed" in the first generation.<sup>1</sup>

It is not the purpose of this present study to seek a definition of 'American'. In one important sense, however, evidence presented in these pages demonstrates that the New England colonists were very slow to consider themselves different from those contemporaries who had never left England. To be sure, agents had a range of experiences which London-based friends and opponents did not have but the same is true of all those who travelled anywhere in this period. Anyone who lived for a time in, say, Scotland or Ireland faced various dangers and inconveniences in transit, experienced surprising new cultural activities and in many cases found the natives less than comprehensible: it is hard to suggest, however, that the traveller in question would have felt like an alien when he returned to the metropolis. It is important to stress that agents in the mid-seventeenth century did not consider themselves as the diplomatic representatives of a foreign power, but rather as English subjects operating in their own capital petitioning their own government.

This study therefore adds to the large amount of material becoming available on the workings of England's Atlantic society. In using evidence offered by the careers of colonial agents, it presents a new perspective on transatlantic contact both at a personal and official level. Agents' work reveals much about governmental processes in the colonies and also about the mechanisms of English colonial administration: analysis of the workings of committees in the latter field sheds new light on the role of individuals and the interaction of factions. As well as offering an overdue examination of the New England agency in its formative years, this study will contribute to various wider fields also.

1 See Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, (1989), 9.

## Agents and the Search for Colonial Legitimacy

The New England colonies sent agents to England as part of a quest for authority, legitimacy and stability. The lack of these things in the early decades of settlement led to tensions and disagreements between the colonies and England, as well as to disputes among and within the colonies themselves. This is not to say that the New England settlements were in any way anarchic, but rather that despite careful planning and various attempts to build a working authority, the colonies failed to establish governmental structures which were capable of solving every new problem which emerged.

Such a failure is hardly unexpected in fledgling colonies, and it took several decades for all the region's settlements to develop mature constitutional arrangements. Often, the first step in this process was to secure the documents which were the single most obvious expression of a colony's legitimacy with respect to England. The most enduring of these took the form of royal charters or land grants from the directors of colonising companies, but agents also acquired a range of other decrees from successive English regimes.

Having such concrete English authority for a settlement offered colonists various advantages, but it also imposed some practical problems and wider responsibilities. Colonies realised early that English governments did not distribute charters on their own initiative, and that representatives would have to be sent to put the colonial case in London. This suggestion that agents might be dispatched tended to bring attitudes toward the home country itself into sharp focus. In



Massachusetts, many settlers were slow to decide how separate from England they wished to be, with the result that questions of agents, transatlantic contact, and English involvement in colonial government were an enduring source of unease and tension.

However difficult colonial attitudes to England could be, it is worth stressing that most New England disputes in this period were solved in New England. In particular, very few crises which affected a single colony resulted in a mission to England, because other means of redress were usually available to the parties concerned. Social and political institutions at local or colony level were, in the great majority of cases, effective enough to make transatlantic agencies a measure of last resort.

Conflicts between different colonies tended to reach the point of last resort more often, however, and most agency missions were dispatched to establish the rights of one settlement with respect to another, as well as with regard to England. Higher authority was available to most New England colonies in the shape of the Confederation of the United Colonies, but Rhode Island, the colony most likely to suffer from external interference, was not a member. When the one settlement which regularly needed recourse to a higher power was deliberately excluded from the mechanisms of colonial problem-solving, missions to England became inevitable.

This chapter surveys the constitutional position of the various New England colonies in relation to England, and also with regard to each other. It then considers those problems, both within and between colonies, which could not be resolved by the original governmental and social establishment of New England, and which necessitated the development of the colonial agency.

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Most agency missions were concerned, if only in part,

with the legal and constitutional basis of colonial settlement in relation to England. England's colonies were always clearly recognisable as English, and their structures and foundations were logical developments of English forms. Apart from the distances involved, settlements in America did not differ much from local government in England in terms of their relationship with the royal authority. English communities had a long historical dependence on royal documents which conferred borough or county status, and which served as the authority for the collective actions of local leaders. In the seventeenth century, England's rulers found that their subjects wished to establish communities further afield than had previously been the case, but familiar mechanisms could be readily adapted to the task. Indeed, given the nature of communications in the seventeenth century, some subjects of Charles I who lived in far corners of the British Isles may have seemed more remote than those across the Atlantic.

The colonial charter was therefore the fundamental instrument of legitimacy in the English Atlantic. All the major New England colonies either had a charter before they were even established in America, or tried to acquire one during the first decades of settlement. Charters and a range of less formal expressions of authority from English governments could overcome many of the problems which colonists encountered in their dealings with one another and with outside forces. Initially, Massachusetts had the only formal charter in the region, and regularly invoked the document as the basis on which it acted against Indians and dissident Englishmen alike. As the period progressed, the smaller colonies gained charters in turn and clung to them with similar determination.

The Massachusetts charter, granted by Charles I in 1629, remained the reference point for constitutional thinking in New England throughout much of the seventeenth century. It was not in itself a radically new

document, except in one specific area which will be discussed below. For the most part, the charter provisions were adapted from earlier documents and stemmed from established precedents. The process by which the Massachusetts Bay Company acquired its charter demonstrates the priorities and concerns of the group, and in particular its determination to place the enterprise on as firm a legal footing as possible. In addition, the attitude of the early Bay Company planners toward the charter continued to influence later transatlantic contacts, including those handled by agents.

Crucially, the colony's claims to self-government during this period were based on the charter and not on a rejection of it. Stressing their colony's charter rights was to become second nature to Massachusetts agents. The charter was a further addition to the pantheon of texts and traditions which opponents of Stuart rule could invoke to defend themselves against what they saw as an arbitrary royal regime. Few of those who feared and condemned Stuart political and religious thinking were contemptuous of English constitutional tradition in itself, and opposition to the regime was more often than not based on the belief that it was the king, or perhaps only his counsellors, who acted in violation of the law. During the political upheavals of the 1640s disparate factions in all parts of the English world regularly proclaimed their loyalty to England's laws and customs at the same time as they were actively fighting against England's monarch. In this respect the New England colonists carried with them a great weight of constitutional baggage, and the legal and documentary framework for their new settlements became a tool with which to resist their opponents in the same way that older texts like Magna Carta inspired factions in England itself.

The acquisition of the Massachusetts charter was the culmination of an enterprise begun in 1620, when James I

gave the Plymouth Company rights to America from the fortieth to the forty-eighth parallel. The Plymouth Company then granted various rights to prospective leaders of the Massachusetts venture who in turn appealed to Charles to have this grant confirmed and strengthened into the form of a royal charter. The charter contained explicit territorial limits, and prescribed in some detail the processes of government for the colony. It also granted rights to all the area's natural resources with the standard condition that the royal purse would be granted one-fifth of all gold and silver discovered.<sup>1</sup>

The Massachusetts Company was determined to secure a royal charter. While the colony could have been established on the basis of the Plymouth Company grant, the new settlers preferred to launch their expedition with the maximum possible measure of governmental legitimacy. The gentry families who led the venture never intended to slink off to the new world from Holland as the Pilgrim settlers had done a decade before, and the royal charter helped them to persuade waverers that the Massachusetts colony had safe and firm foundations.

Equally useful was the charter's well-known lack of a prescribed English location for the Company's meetings. There was nothing in the charter to stop the Massachusetts settlers moving their entire authority base to America, and the opportunity of increased political influence in a largely autonomous colony was another incentive for the doubtful. Even the elder John Winthrop, the colony's first governor, may have joined the expedition in part because he saw his social and political position declining in England and hoped for better things as a founder of the Bay Colony.<sup>2</sup> By virtue of the charter, the Bay leadership could claim administrative autonomy: "liberty and power was granted

1 The Massachusetts Charter is printed in a number of sources: probably the most widely available is *English Historical Documents* IX: 72-84.

2 See Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma*, (1958), 42-3.

to us to live under the government of a governor and magistrates of our own choosing, and under laws of our own making".<sup>1</sup>

Charters could also have some very negative aspects, however, in that they offered a colony's opponents a convenient focus for their allegations. Like many legal documents, the Massachusetts charter was open to a degree of interpretation and prone to selective quotation. Rhode Island agents often argued that Massachusetts was exceeding the authority and powers of its charter, and such charges inevitably carried the implication that the Bay Colony was defying English law. However extensive the powers of self-government granted by a charter, it remained a product of English law, and might be revoked by similar means. One of the central priorities of Massachusetts agents was the defence of their charter against English leaders who might be influenced by such arguments when presented by agents from other colonies. The Bay leaders feared that any of the successive English governments of this period might recall the charter in the courts and impose a Governor on the colony from England.

Roger Williams, founding leader of the Rhode Island settlements, was virulent in his opposition to the Massachusetts charter. Williams began his New England career as a minister in Massachusetts, where he concluded that the Bay Colony had no right to the land it occupied under its charter. Williams questioned the scriptural justification for the land-granting powers of English kings. Fundamentally linked to this idea was Williams' belief that English colonies would only have legitimate title to their chartered territory if the necessary land

1 See Massachusetts General Court to Parliament, 1651, printed in Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay*, Lawrence S. Mayo, ed., (1936), vol. 1: 429.



was fairly purchased from the Indians.<sup>1</sup> Once in Rhode Island, Williams diligently bought the land on which Providence was built from the local Indian leaders, and helped other refugees to buy the island of Aquidneck shortly afterward.

Even Williams, however, knew that some form of constitutional legitimacy was necessary for the good conduct of government, and served as an agent twice in pursuit of English authority for Rhode Island. Importantly, though, the empowering document sought by Williams in his 1643/4 mission was quite different from that held by Massachusetts. Williams' patent included territorial boundaries, but stressed that these were already occupied either by the Rhode Island settlers or by the Narragansett Indians. Much simpler in form than the Massachusetts charter, the patent authorised the establishment of civil governments obeying the laws and customs of England, in territory already purchased from the Indians. Williams' patent gave Rhode Island legal status in England without suggesting that the colony's lands were a gift from a divinely ordained king.<sup>2</sup>

Williams' decision that a charter of some kind was necessary stemmed in large part from the hostile attitudes of neighbouring colonies. Massachusetts in particular believed that the Narragansett towns had no constitutional legitimacy, nor any right to exercise powers of government. In part, this stemmed from the willingness of the Rhode Island settlements to welcome victims of the legal systems of the United Colonies, a policy which the Bay considered a challenge to its own

1 Glenn LaFantasie argues that Williams' opposition to the charter stemmed more from theology than practical concern for the rights of Indians. Even so, Williams' stance on the land issue had serious political implications: Francis Jennings notes that Massachusetts used control of land rights as a means of strengthening its central government under the charter. See LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 14-15; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 140.

2 The 14 March 1644 Patent is printed in RI Rec I: 143-6.

chartered authority. There was also a lengthy debate between the Bay and New Plymouth over whether one of them should claim the Narragansett territory for itself. All such concerns boiled down to the frequent allegation made by Massachusetts that the township of Providence and its allies had "no authority for civil government".<sup>1</sup>

After Williams returned with his new patent in 1644, Rhode Island rarely missed an opportunity to remind opposing colonies of the powers it derived from England. In 1645, Rhode Islanders used their new-found status to rebuff a Bay Colony attempt to intimidate the Narragansett communities into ceding their lands and living under Massachusetts law. The settlers noted that they and Massachusetts both derived authority from the same "mother state", and that England's leaders would no more tolerate violations of the new Rhode Island patent than they would breaches of the Bay charter. Later, in 1649, the Shawomet settlers reminded the United Colonies of the 1646 order from the English government that their township was not to be harassed.<sup>2</sup>

The other New England colonies, less concerned with threats from their neighbours, were never as anxious as Rhode Island to seek English approval for their settlements. New Haven and Connecticut both planned missions to England in the 1640s, but after initial reverses did not pursue the question. New Haven considered the problem in 1644, and went so far as to send an agent to seek a patent from the Long Parliament: the unfortunate agent, Thomas Gregson, was lost at sea.<sup>3</sup>

1 Williams to Major John Mason and Governor Thomas Prince, 22 June 1670, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 612.

2 Letter from Providence Plantations to Massachusetts, 9 August 1645, in Mass Archives, 2: 6; Note of United Colonies meeting 31 July 1649, in Hazard, *State Papers*, II: 135. The activities of the Shawomet men in London are examined in Chapter 6 below.

3 NH Rec I: 149, II: 519. For Gregson's loss see Mary Jones, *Congregational Commonwealth: Connecticut, 1636-1662*, (1968), 161.

The following year Connecticut asked George Fenwick to seek an extension to the territory contained in the Saybrook patent, in an attempt to revise the ill-defined boundaries of the Connecticut Valley settlements.<sup>1</sup> Fenwick had been intending to return to England anyway, and quickly became embroiled in English domestic affairs. Despite his inaction, Connecticut made no attempt to follow up the plan.

Both Connecticut and New Haven felt more secure constitutionally than Rhode Island in large part because they were members of the Confederation of the United Colonies of New England. Rhode Island was excluded from membership, and came to view the United Colonies as a threat rather than a source of colonial authority. On several occasions over the years, different parts of Rhode Island asked to be admitted to the ranks of the United Colonies and called for assistance against belligerent Indians even more frequently. The response to the latter requests, the Shawomett settlers complained, was usually "let the Indians destroy them."<sup>2</sup> For Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Haven and Plymouth, however, the United Colonies became a source of authority and problem solving. Although the Bay Colony was by far the strongest economic and military force in the region, each colony was represented by two commissioners, and the smaller settlements were not always willing to follow Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Conn Rec* I: 128.

2 See Shawomett to Massachusetts, 22 August 1661, in *Mass Archives*, 2: 20-1.

3 One negative view of the United Colonies is that of Francis Jennings, who sees the organisation as a vehicle designed to further the territorial aims of Massachusetts while curbing Connecticut's expansionism- the Bay Colony had no wish to see Connecticut grow to be a powerful rival. Jennings slightly overestimates the dominance of Massachusetts, though. For example, Connecticut and New Haven were able to follow a more aggressive policy against the Dutch in New Netherland than the Bay Colony would have liked in the early 1650s. See Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 260, 265.

The main argument offered by the colonies for joining in confederation was the developing turmoil in England in the early 1640s. England's civil war meant that the colonies were "hindered from that humble way of seeking advice or reaping those comfortable fruits of protection which at other times we might well expect."<sup>1</sup> For the rest of the interregnum, the Confederation served as a higher authority for those settlements which belonged to it. The Confederation's legitimacy, questioned constantly by Rhode Island, lost even its own justification as civil war gave way to more stable government in England. The formation of the United Colonies could only be explained away for as long as successive regimes in England were likely to be transitory. Even then, Rhode Island frequently criticised its neighbours for creating the Confederation without permission from England. Agent John Clarke was urged to stress that the Narragansett towns had never been tainted by membership of the United Colonies and were loyal only to the English government, "not being subject to any others in matter of our civil state."<sup>2</sup>

The Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660 threatened an upheaval of the constitutional framework of the English colonies. The Bay's royal charter was only as valid as the new King wished it to be, and Rhode Island's Parliamentary patent had little recognisable value at all. Massachusetts recalled with unease that the last decade of Stuart rule, in the 1630s, had seen incessant lobbying against the Bay Colony by its opponents in England. No sooner was Charles II crowned than many of these old enemies began once more to call for the revocation of the Massachusetts charter. Twenty years

1 The Articles of Confederation of the United Colonies are printed in William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation 1606-1646*, ed. William T. Davis (1908), 382-388.

2 See Rhode Island to John Clarke, 5 November 1658, in John Callender, *The Early History of Rhode Island*, (repr. 1971), 236.



without royal government had led Massachusetts to consider itself a free state, argued former colonist Samuel Maverick. "For so many years", he informed Lord Chancellor Clarendon, the colony's leaders "styled themselves a state and Commonwealth and never owned His Majesty's sovereignty over them until they saw there was no avoiding of it."<sup>1</sup>

In the face of such criticisms, sections of Massachusetts society believed their charter to be in danger unless the colony formally proclaimed Charles II. The Bay leadership was unsure of the new circumstances facing it, and reverted to inertia: anxious colonists petitioned the General Court for a full acknowledgement of Charles' authority, arguing that this was the only course likely to preserve the "ancient liberties" of the colony.<sup>2</sup> When the General Court finally acted, it based its approach, once again, on an unshakeable commitment to the charter. The Bay's agency mission to England in 1662 was intended as a formal expression of respect for the new King and nothing more. In particular, agents Simon Bradstreet and John Norton were forbidden from taking part in any negotiations which might alter the terms of the charter.<sup>3</sup>

The other New England colonies were equally concerned by the Restoration, but for different reasons. Whatever the arguments over the application of the Bay Charter, at least Massachusetts could claim in England that they owed their authority to a royal charter. Assuming Charles II could be persuaded to maintain the charter intact, the Bay would be in a uniquely powerful constitutional position. To Rhode Island, however, the

1 See Maverick to Clarendon, [June? 1662], in *NYHS Collections*, II (1869): 37.

2 Petition to General Court of Massachusetts, 19 June 1661, in *Mass Archives*, 106: 36.

3 The agents' instructions are in *Hutchinson Papers*, II: 76. The divisions within Massachusetts over the choice and dispatch of agents in 1661 are considered in Chapter 4 below.



Restoration was a variation on an old theme. The colony was familiar with the practice of sending agents to every new English regime for backing and approval. As a result of this experience, Rhode Island recognised that the Restoration offered an opportunity for lasting formalisation of New England's constitutional status.

The importance of constitutional precedent is never more clear than in the approaches made to the restored monarchy by the smaller New England colonies. Just as Massachusetts always fell back on its charter when threatened, Rhode Island sought to make use of the precedent established by the 1644 patent when petitioning Charles II. Some selective rewriting of history was necessary, and the brazen nature of the doctoring serves to emphasise the importance agents placed on acquiring some form of legitimate background before petitioning for a new charter. The patent was described as having been granted "in the name of the King and Parliament of England", and "by the most potent and royal power".<sup>1</sup> This, despite the fact that Charles I had been engaged in a civil war with his Parliament for two years when the patent was issued. To imply, as agent John Clarke did, that the patent was the result of a petition to the new King's "royal father" was a risky tactic.<sup>2</sup> As such it demonstrates just how necessary visible precedents were considered to be.

Connecticut's John Winthrop was just as familiar with the use of strained precedent as John Clarke. Like the Rhode Island agent, Winthrop based his appeal for a charter on a document dating from the reign of Charles I. When he reached London, Winthrop tried unsuccessfully to locate a copy of an original grant from the New England Council of 1637, relating to southern Connecticut. Unperturbed by the lack of evidence, Winthrop petitioned

1 The patent is thus described in the colony's commission to agent John Clarke, 18 October 1660, RI Rec I: 433-4.

2 Clarke to Charles II, 29 January 1662, PRO, CO1/15, 4: ff 7-8.

Charles II for a charter with generous territorial boundaries, claiming to derive them from the old patent. The original and a duplicate of that document had, according to the agent, been lost in a fire and a shipwreck respectively. Winthrop was at pains to stress in his petition to Charles II that the 1637 patent dated from the twelfth year of the reign of Charles I.<sup>1</sup>

Connecticut was, in general, content to base its new charter on the Massachusetts model. Winthrop was commissioned to seek a document that included "all the rights, privileges, authority and immunities that are granted in the Massachusetts Colony's Patent."<sup>2</sup> Although the Connecticut settlers had not always been on close terms with Massachusetts, this was much more of a reason for adopting the powers of the Bay charter than it was for rejecting them. With its boundaries and authority formalised in the same terms as those of Massachusetts, Connecticut could approach any conflict as an equal.

Connecticut owed the rapid advancement of its constitutional position to Winthrop's vision and effort, but the other smaller members of the United Colonies were largely caught unawares at the Restoration. Governor Prince of Plymouth sent an unsuccessful petition to Charles II via John Winthrop.<sup>3</sup> Only when royal commissioners arrived in New England in the mid-1660s did Plymouth seriously address the problem of its status with regard to the English crown.<sup>4</sup> The New Haven colonists also hoped that Winthrop would negotiate on their behalf during his Restoration mission, but his new Connecticut charter swallowed New Haven rather than establishing it

1 Petition of John Winthrop, in Rawlinson MSS A175: 109.

2 *Conn Rec* I: 580.

3 Robert Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, (1966): 214.

4 The separatism which characterised Plymouth's religious establishment easily influenced the colony's political outlook, although in the 1620s it had actively maintained contact with England. See Harry Ward, *Statism in Plymouth Colony*, (1973).

as a chartered colony in its own right.<sup>1</sup>

The smaller members of the United Colonies approached the restored monarchy with some naivete and mixed success, but both Rhode Island and Massachusetts proved that they had learned from the troubles of the interregnum. Questions of authority and legitimacy were the staple fare of Rhode Island's agents by the time of the Restoration, and Massachusetts also tended to see constitutional issues lurking behind even the most mundane of transatlantic contacts. Concern over their constitutional position had contrasting effects of the leadership of these two colonies, leading to pragmatism in Rhode Island and paranoia in Massachusetts. Inevitably, such attitudes came to a head when successive agency missions were being planned and executed.

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Planning a mission to England forced colonial leaders to address some potentially uncomfortable issues. Clearly, the dispatch of an agent in itself implied a failure to reach a solution in the colonies. In some cases, such failure was due to insurmountable obstacles or enemy action and carried no stigma, but in others there was a clear sense that sending an agent was a shameful admission of defeat. In the first generation, when every settler had an immediate personal tie with England, the formal relationship between colony and home country could have implications at all levels of colonial society. Such soul-searching was most pronounced in Massachusetts, which remained ambivalent about English influence throughout this period and beyond. This section considers the dispatch of the first Massachusetts agency in some detail, and very briefly examines two others: all reveal the complex repercussions which could stem from the

<sup>1</sup> New Haven's failure to acquire constitutional security is contrasted with Rhode Island's success in chapter 7 below.

debate over the need for a mission.

Massachusetts sent its first mission to England in 1641 to deal with an economic and political crisis. While the aims of the mission were largely straightforward, its organisation and subsequent progress encapsulate the tensions and doubts which assailed the Bay Colony at the beginning of its second decade. In addition, the circumstances surrounding the agency set the tone for later missions: many of the experiences- good and bad- of later Massachusetts agents stemmed from lessons learned or ignored in the aftermath of the 1641 mission. Sending agents to England had the inevitable effect of concentrating colonists' minds on their own attitudes to the home country, and the lack of consensus on the latter issue is starkly revealed by the controversy surrounding the Bay's first mission.

Whether or not Massachusetts needed to send agents to England in 1641 was part of a far wider question of how close the colony should be to the home country's practices in economics, religion and politics alike. The elder Winthrop and his closest allies always struggled against the tendency toward religious separatism in the colony, which was encouraged in some quarters by physical separation from England.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps more worrying was the tendency of religious separatism to breed a range of related ideas about continuing ties with England. After all, if Massachusetts could only be spiritually pure if it renounced the English church, how could contact with England's wider society and economy be maintained without danger?

The Bay Colony faced a number of outbreaks of such thinking during the sixteen-thirties, often related to the activities of Roger Williams and John Endecott in Salem. Williams' exile to the Narragansett Bay in 1635 reduced the direct effect he could have on Massachusetts

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Morgan identifies this as the central concern of Winthrop's leadership. See *The Puritan Dilemma*, esp. Chapters 9 and 13.

settlers, but Endecott, as will be seen, remained a vocal and influential separatist all his life. Endecott had led the Company's advance party to New England in 1628, and his relations with the settlers who arrived two years later were occasionally tempestuous. One of his most dramatic gestures was the iconoclastic removal of the cross from the Massachusetts flag, at a time when many feared the imminent intervention in the colony's affairs by Archbishop Laud's Council.<sup>1</sup>

The next major disagreement between Endecott and the colonial leadership concerned the first agency mission, and it is no coincidence that the dispute arose at a time when the continuing dependence of Massachusetts on England was embarrassingly clear. For as long as the colonial economy remained buoyant in the 1630s, such wider implications rarely surfaced, but the full effect of the Bay's ongoing need for transatlantic contacts was brought home sharply at the beginning of the next decade. Prosperity had been largely due to the steady stream of new immigrants who came to the colony, keeping the economy growing with their imported savings and their need for housing, seeds, equipment, livestock and all the other necessities of a predominantly rural society. Massachusetts maintained its expansion in agricultural production throughout the 1630s, and surpluses were swallowed by the demands of new settlers. The proceeds were either used to finance further expansion, or to buy hardware and consumer goods shipped from England. Clearly, though, this state of affairs was only sustainable if immigration continued unchecked, and in 1639 the number of new arrivals slowed dramatically. By 1641, the Massachusetts leadership was fully aware of the

1 See Francis J. Bremer, "Endecott and the Red Cross: Puritan Iconoclasm in the New World", *JAS* 24 (1990): 5-22, esp. 6-7.



onset of a major crisis.<sup>1</sup>

The elder John Winthrop was in no doubt that prospective immigrants were staying in England because of events there, rather than any failure on the part of the colony. Winthrop was well informed of developments in England and believed that colonial affairs were fatally vulnerable to changing circumstances across the Atlantic. He recorded in his *Journal* the situation in the summer of 1641.

The parliament of England setting upon a general reformation both of church and state, the Earl of Strafford being beheaded, and the archbishop (our great enemy) and many others of the great officers and judges, bishops and others, imprisoned and called to account, this caused all men to stay in England in expectation of a new world, so as few coming to us, all foreign commodities grew scarce, and our own of no price. Corn would buy nothing...and many gone out of the country, so as no man could pay his debts, nor the merchants make return into England for their commodities, which occasioned many there to speak evil of us.<sup>2</sup>

Rumours of impending upheaval in England had been depressing the colonial economy for some months before Winthrop wrote. The General Court had heard in October 1640 that "many men in the plantation are in debt, and there is not money sufficient to discharge the same". The Court attempted to impose wage controls, urging that servants, labourers and workmen "should be content to abate their wages according to the fall of the commodities". Colonists were later banned from using wheat as a barter item, because the authorities were desperate to find an export market and bring in much needed revenue: while wheat might not be as lucrative as the tobacco of the Chesapeake colonies, it was the nearest New Englanders could find to a cash crop.<sup>3</sup>

1 The Bay Colony's troubles are discussed in Darrett B. Rutman, "Governor Winthrop's Garden Crop: The Significance of Agriculture in the Early Commerce of Massachusetts Bay", *WMQ* 20 (1963): 396-415.

2 Winthrop, *Journal* II: 31.

3 *Mass Rec* I: 307, 326, 337.

Winthrop worried about the effect of such problems on the Bay's domestic economy and society, but he was also aware that bleak economic news could only confirm the doubts which some leading Englishmen already had about New England. Many of the most influential sponsors and backers of colonies were frustrated with the inability of the northern colonies to develop viable export commodities and generate profits for investors. As early as the mid-1630s the prominent colonial sponsor Viscount Saye and Sele began encouraging New Englanders to travel south to assist in the settlement of Providence Island in the Caribbean. John Humphrey, a Massachusetts colonist and former deputy-governor of the Bay Company, planned to move to the island colony in 1640 and tried to persuade others to travel with him.<sup>1</sup>

The slump of 1641 threatened to turn doubts among leading Englishmen into a wholesale write-off of New England's prospects. Winthrop believed that Massachusetts could only restore its reputation and the confidence of its supporters by having an effective voice in England. This view was not shared by all his fellow leaders, though, and settlers fell into mutual recrimination over who should be blamed for the crisis. Sending an agent to negotiate directly with England's leaders seemed an obvious course of action to some colonists, but the colony leadership was divided over who should serve as agent, and indeed whether one should go at all. After a decade in America, the disagreements over the first Massachusetts agency went to the heart of the Bay Colony's sense of its own purpose.

Winthrop's own account of the arguments within the colony reflects the careful steps which he had to take in

1 Lord Saye was a keen supporter of various colonising projects in America, as well as a leading figure in the House of Lords during the 1640s. A more detailed examination of his activities appears in Chapter 6 below. See Lord Saye to John Winthrop, 9 July 1640, in *Winthrop Papers* IV: 263-267; Winthrop, *Journal* II: 11.

order to ensure the dispatch of a mission.<sup>1</sup> According to Winthrop, the first suggestion that a mission should be contemplated came not from the colony but from some sympathisers in England. This proposal was rejected by the General Court. However, the Massachusetts Court of Assistants was meeting at the time, and

advising with some of the elders about some course to serve the providence of God, in making use the present opportunity of a ship of our own being ready bound for England, it was thought fit to send some chosen men in her with commission to negotiate for us, as occasion should be offered, both in furthering the work of reformation of the churches...and to satisfy our countrymen of the true cause why our engagements there have not been satisfied this year...and also to seek out some way, by procuring cotton from the West Indies, or other means that might be lawful, and not dishonourable to the gospel for our present supply of clothing, etc., for the country was like to afford enough for food....<sup>2</sup>

Winthrop's account is the work of an accomplished and subtle propagandist, although he may also have been trying to persuade himself of the propriety of the action to be taken. He denies any hint that the mission was a concession to the English authorities, even to the point of noting that the agents intended to sail on a Bay Colony ship. In addition, religious motives for the mission are given prominence, before turning to the economic reasons. Even here, the priority is to negotiate with creditors rather than beg for assistance in more general terms, and the final admission that the colony is short of clothing is balanced by the claim that there is

1 Winthrop, *Journal* II: 24-6, 31-2.

2 Winthrop, *Journal* II: 25.

no shortage of food.<sup>1</sup>

Even Winthrop could not persuade all the colonists that the agents were travelling to "serve the providence of God". John Endecott wrote to Winthrop in February 1641, having consulted Salem's other notables, Emmanuel Downing and William Hathorne.<sup>2</sup> Salem's minister, Hugh Peter, was one of the agents chosen by the court: Endecott objected to this choice, but more importantly he was also opposed to the mission itself.<sup>3</sup> While Winthrop records that Endecott was primarily concerned with Peter's role, the Salem leader's own account places far more stress on wider questions and some of his comments reveal a deep unease that the Bay Colony was betraying its original aims.

Endecott believed that economic concerns were the primary motive for the proposed mission, and that the causes of the Bay's problems could easily be found much closer at hand than London. Surely, argued Endecott, the scarcity of money in the Bay was due to previous over-indulgence in "wines and liquors, and English provisions of diet and unnecessary bravery in apparel: all which tends to the scandal of religion and poverty". Endecott concluded by asking whether "there will not be more peace unto us and blessing upon us in a patient waiting upon

1 How valid is Winthrop's *Journal* as a historical source? Richard Dunn argues that it provides a detailed and often candid account of the conflicts within Massachusetts, because Winthrop was convinced of his own righteousness and wished to expose the 'errors' of his opponents in full. This is certainly true of his accounts of major religious schisms. Still, Winthrop's account of the colony's first mission indicates that he was capable of adjusting less clear-cut evidence to his advantage also. See Dunn, "John Winthrop writes his Journal", *WMQ* (1984): 185-212.

2 Endecott, Downing and Hathorne were the three leading figures in Salem, and were generally rivals for local power and influence. See Richard P. Gildrie, *Salem, Massachusetts, 1623-1683: A Covenant Community*, (1975), 91.

3 For the debate over the choice of individual agents, see the following chapter.

God, than in a (seeming at least) distrust of His providence."<sup>1</sup>

Endecott's separatist voice was not one which Winthrop wanted to hear, because it reminded him of the compromises which he deemed essential to the survival of the Bay Colony. Endecott's opinions continually troubled the consciences of the Bay leadership, because he rejected the convenient fiction favoured by other leaders that crossing the ocean had not been a *de facto* separation from England and its church.<sup>2</sup> The furore over the 1641 mission was just the latest manifestation of Endecott's belief that the Bay Colony was moving too slowly away from England and toward a new reformed society.

The debate over the dispatch of the agents draws attention to the doubts and loss of confidence which crept into the initially united and committed Bay Colony as the first decade of settlement came to an end. The 1641 mission was dispatched over Endecott's objections, but was not a final victory for those settlers who believed that the English dimension to colonial problems could not be ignored. Massachusetts remained divided throughout the interregnum over the extent to which it should try to survive in its own brand of splendid isolation.

The Bay Colony was once again on the defensive in the mid-1640s when it considered its second mission, and again when planning its fourth agency shortly after the Restoration. The details of both these missions are examined in more detail below, but it is worth noting

1 John Endecott to John Winthrop, [ca. February 1641], in *Winthrop Papers* IV: 314-15. Agent Hugh Peter himself recalled long afterward that the mission was largely economic, with the agents having been sent "to mediate for ease in Customs and Excise; the country being poor, and a tender plant." See Peter, *A Dying Father's Legacy*, (1661), 102.

2 See Morgan, *Puritan Dilemma*, 103, 119; Gildrie, *Salem, Massachusetts*, 7.



here the similarities between them and the 1641 expedition. Proposals that agents be sent always provoked thoughts on the part of the colony leadership about the role and nature of the colony, and how these could be defended before English critics.

The 1646/7 mission, dispatched in the wake of severe criticism of Massachusetts on both sides of the Atlantic, caused various colonial leaders to try to define the Bay Colony's mission in America. Samuel Symonds had a crusading image of the colony as being in the vanguard of a reformation which would encompass all of England's people. Symonds told the elder Winthrop that he saw Massachusetts as a refuge for the persecuted, a rendezvous for English expeditions to the West Indies, and a training ground for godly soldiers and sailors who might be "employed against that blasphemous city". Had Symonds spoken only of soldiers, his words might be regarded as metaphorical: there are numerous examples of military metaphors in descriptions of the godly which should not be taken literally. The specific mention of sailors is a strong implication, however, that Symonds believed the colony should provide real military and naval support for English expeditions against the Catholic powers.<sup>1</sup>

Such millenarian views of New England's destiny required an element of English involvement in the region's affairs, and other colonial leaders feared that England would expect to call upon colonists to help in English conflicts. Official statements accompanying the 1646 mission stressed the work which had to be done in the colonies, in converting Indians and establishing secure plantations, and deliberately toned down suggestions that New England could offer any assistance to the English Parliament. At this point, and again in 1661, charter rights and the humble wishes of pious colonists represented the official priorities of

<sup>1</sup> See Symonds to Winthrop, 6 January 1647, in *Winthrop Papers*, IV: 126.



Massachusetts, and the voices of those who would have liked to take a more active part in the wider concerns of England's developing commercial and territorial empire were kept in the background.

Doubts and uncertainties continued to surround the Bay Colony's relations with England throughout this period and beyond. As the political structures of the colony became more developed, divisions over the transatlantic relationship were an important part of factional disputes. By the time of the 1661 mission, there were clearly identifiable groups of leading colonists on both sides of the issue, and their respective thinking dominated the debate over the agency.

One common theme in most Massachusetts disagreements over agency missions was that opponents of missions were generally part of the legitimate political process. Massachusetts faced a range of vocal dissidents and rebels in its early decades, and many are considered in this study, but opposition to agencies was of a different nature altogether. Leading figures in the colony, including members of governing bodies, opposed the 1662 mission, and it is clear that questions raised by the dispatch of agents struck fundamental chords. The Bay Colony was never able to write opponents of missions off as heretics and fanatics, however often such an approach could be used with other dissenters. It would be too simplistic to credit the colonial agency with a key role in defining what was legitimate opposition to colonial authorities and what was not, but attitudes to England, as manifested in the debate over agents, certainly played their part.

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The first two sections of this chapter have considered vital issues of importance to the colonial leadership, and to any colonist concerned about transatlantic relations on a wide scale. Still, the immediate causes of

most agencies were less abstract, however much they may have been intertwined with wider questions. Most missions were provoked by the relations of colonies and colonists to one another, rather than the ties between colonies and England. This section considers conflicts within colonies, which were frequent and traumatic, but which led to relatively few missions to England.

The first Massachusetts mission, discussed above, displays some characteristics which were to emerge as important factors in later agencies. Most notable is the question of localism. The strain between John Endecott and John Winthrop over the 1641 mission was in part symptomatic of a more widespread tension between town and colony government. While Endecott had political and theological differences with the mainstream colonial elite, his town of Salem had also been in dispute with the General Court over Roger Williams' appointment as minister. Historians differ over this point: Edmund Morgan sees the dispute as being centred on Williams' separatism, but the deeper question of land tenure is explored by Francis Jennings. There is widespread agreement that the General Court effectively blackmailed Salem by threatening not to grant the town land if it supported Williams.<sup>1</sup>

All the New England colonies had internal disputes in the early decades of settlement. The Rhode Island towns have the most dramatic reputation for in-fighting, factional divisiveness and a general inability to agree on a suitable role for a central colony government, but none of the other colonies escaped such conflicts. Religious dissent was a common thread in the ranks of the United Colonies, with individuals and larger congregations alike falling foul of the central authorities. Sometimes communities united in their grievances against other sections of colonial society, and such incidents were caused by both religious and

<sup>1</sup> See Morgan, *Puritan Dilemma*, 119-128; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 138-142.

political disagreements. A belief in the right of individual towns and congregations to govern their own affairs was deeply rooted in the English background of the colonists, and internal disputes often owed much to the sense of local identity maintained by the settlers. In the early years of Massachusetts settlement the colony towns retained strong local loyalties despite their physical proximity to one another. Boston itself may have dominated the colony economically but the colony leadership as a whole was reluctant to allow political power to rest with those magistrates who lived in the 'capital'.<sup>1</sup>

In the United Colonies, only once did an internal dispute lead to a mission to England, when the Massachusetts Remonstrants took their petition to London in 1647. Importantly, that conflict was not one of the many examples of close-knit local communities standing against central authority, nor did the dissidents have clearly religious motives. The dispute over the Remonstrance was unusual in leading to an agency, and as such it offers an insight into those problem-solving options available to other colonists which were denied to Robert Child and his followers.

Many of the conflicts of early New England have been studied in detail by historians, who have focused on the political and social instability caused by vocal dissenters, and the often drastic means by which colonial authorities quietened their opponents. From the viewpoint of this study, though, rather different questions need to be asked. Dramatic as they were, most of New England's internal disputes were nonetheless solved, one way or another, in the colonies. New England may not consciously

1 T.H. Breen traces conflict between local and colony government from the 1632 Watertown taxation dispute onward, concluding that all the major disputes of the 1640s "were sparked by the conflict between local and colony-wide interests." See Breen's pioneering examination of colonial and English localism, "Persistent Localism: English Social Change and the Shaping of New England Institutions." *WMQ* 32 (1975): 3-28.

have set out to solve disputes, but the relative lack of missions to England demonstrates that safety valves and solutions did exist which satisfied most people.

What, then, were the main characteristics of some of these disputes, and how were they resolved? The Bay Colony's most famous split was the Antinomian crisis of 1637/38. This schism in the town and church of Boston resulted in the exile of many of the most prominent colonists. It did not result in an appeal to the English authorities, however, despite the fact that many of those involved returned to England in the aftermath of the conflict. Two of Anne Hutchinson's closest supporters, the younger Sir Henry Vane and Richard Hutchinson, were among those who remigrated, but neither they nor the group as a whole made any attempt to appeal against the actions of the General Court in banishing them from their homes.<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of reasons for this behaviour, some of which have their roots in England, some in the colonies. First, England was hostile territory for advocates of Congregationalist church policy in the 1630s, and any petitioning member of the Hutchinson faction would have had short shrift from Archbishop Laud's Commission for Foreign Plantations. The Antinomians had all come from England less than a decade before the crisis in Boston, and could hardly have forgotten the religious temper of their home country. Indeed, England presented an even less appealing prospect in 1638 than it had prior to the migration of 1630, because it was only after the beginning of the Massachusetts venture that Archbishop Laud reached the height of his powers. Unpleasant memories of the

<sup>1</sup> Vane, as will be seen below, played a central role in helping Rhode Island agents in the 1640s. The most detailed study of the individuals involved in the case is Emery Battis, *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony*, (1962); key documents are collected in David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, (2nd edn. 1990).



authorities' attitudes were rekindled by the experiences of some New Englanders who had returned to England earlier in the 1630s. Plymouth settler and future agent Edward Winslow was jailed in 1634 for unlicensed preaching in New England, an act which he claimed he performed out of necessity in the absence of a qualified minister.<sup>1</sup>

More importantly, though, the Antinomians had potentially fruitful options open to them elsewhere in New England. A casual look at the list of destinations of those who left Massachusetts might imply a panicky scattering, but in fact the variety is a reflection of the options available to the dissidents. Onward movement from Massachusetts was still fairly straightforward in the late 1630s, with the Narragansett region and Long Island offering prime land outside the jurisdiction of the Bay Colony. The Antinomians simply took the principle that had brought them to Massachusetts one step further: just as they had moved away from England, so they could move away from the Bay Colony. The Hutchinson-Coddington migration to the Narragansett Bay, for example, was not a blind dash into an unknown wasteland, but rather followed a careful examination of the region's promising natural resources.<sup>2</sup> Other exiles headed north for New Hampshire, and while many of these turned south again after their first winter, their continuing migration is itself a measure of the freedom of movement open to them.

Dramatic though the Antinomian crisis undoubtedly was, it was far from being the only division to create a crisis in one of the New England colonies. While Massachusetts had a sufficiently developed local

1 See Winslow's petition to the Lords of the Council, 1634, in *MHS Proceedings* (1860-62): 131-34.

2 Carl Bridenbaugh considers the settlement of Aquidneck "an agricultural-commercial experiment that had been thoughtfully and minutely planned in advance at Boston and adequately financed by men who were thoroughly familiar with the management of estates." See Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton*, 22.

political system to make the Antinomian dispute into a clash between the establishment and a vocal minority, elsewhere in New England schisms divided towns and communities into virtually equal parts. While there were those in the Bay who could gather sufficient political strength to expel the Antinomians after full legal proceedings, in smaller communities neither side in a dispute could necessarily wield authority over the other. In such circumstances parts of the community would leave and found a new township, without attracting the sort of attention the Antinomians have had from contemporaries and historians alike. In Connecticut for example, the town of Wethersfield fragmented repeatedly in the 1640s, with groups leaving to form new congregations elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

As the 1640s progressed, however, two major changes affected the prospects of minority factions in the New England colonies. The rise of Parliamentary authority in England made appeals to that quarter seem more likely to be heard. In addition, the mass migration of the previous decade had led to a realisation that there was a limited supply of habitable coastal land in New England. More seriously, there was an ever shrinking amount of land not yet claimed by one or another of the established colonies. The increase in agency activity in the 1640s reflects the tendency for those in dispute to find a way of defending their settlements rather than moving them elsewhere.

Despite this, the dispatch of an agent to seek redress for an internal dispute remained very much an exception in the United Colonies. It is therefore useful to compare the one example of a Massachusetts faction which sent an agent with a near-contemporary case for which a solution was found in the colonies: respectively, these were the dispute over the Remonstrance of 1646, and the Hingham militia case.

The Hingham dispute demonstrates the tensions

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Lucas, *Valley of Discord*, (1976), 41-2.

between central and local government in early Massachusetts. The town of Hingham elected Lt. Anthony Eames to the captaincy of its train band in 1645, only to change its mind and choose another local man, Bozone Allen, instead. Local control over the election of militia officers was, by the mid-1640s, a well established and cherished part of the authority of the Massachusetts towns. In this case, however, Eames won the support of the colony magistrates, and after a war of words which included the attempted impeachment of then Deputy Governor John Winthrop, the leaders of the Hingham community were fined a total of £100.<sup>1</sup>

The case of the Remonstrants was different in a number of ways. The men involved take their name from the Remonstrance which they presented to the Massachusetts General Court in May 1646. A range of concerns appear in this document, from the continuing financial problems of the colony to the restrictive nature of Bay Colony church policy. In particular, the petitioners complained that the Bay churches refused communion to all settlers except those who could meet unduly strict standards, and that many prosperous and law-abiding citizens were as a result disfranchised by the colony's freemanship rules. The General Court's response was to levy heavy fines on the leading complainants, and imprison those thought to be about to launch a mission to England. In the end, the Remonstrance was carried to London by one of the petitioners, John Fowle, and William Vassall, who had a long record of opposition to the Massachusetts authorities.<sup>2</sup>

1 For a summary of the events in the militia case, see Robert Wall, *Massachusetts Bay: The Crucial Decade*, (1972), chapter 3.

2 The activities of the Remonstrants are noted in Wall, *Massachusetts Bay*, 165-186; George L. Kitteredge, "Dr. Robert Child the Remonstrant." *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, 21 (1919): 1-146. The Remonstrance itself is printed in *Hutchinson Papers I*: 188-196.

William Vassall was a common factor in both of the cases under consideration here. Although settled in Plymouth colony, he had helped organise the Hingham defendants' case, as he would that of the Remonstrants. His decision to go to England in the latter instance was influenced by the fact that by the mid-1640s the English situation was becoming more favourable to New England petitioners: agents from Massachusetts and Rhode Island had already achieved some successes. Nonetheless, the Hinghamites had not been prepared to send Vassall or anyone else to England. There are in fact significant differences between the circumstances in which the two groups of petitioners found themselves, which go some way to explaining why different communities came to varying decisions over the need for a mission to England.

The reasons why the militia case became an issue in the first place, and also why it did not result in the dispatch of an agent to England, are to be found in the traditional practices of the Hingham people. David Grayson Allen's study of the effects on local politics and society of the migration of communities from England to the colonies reveals that the region around Hingham, Norfolk, had some unusual characteristics which were maintained by the families who left to form the new settlement of Hingham, Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> Allen argues that both Hinghams were characterised by a stronger than average sense of town identity. This stemmed from the combination of a lack of local manorial control in Old Hingham, and a strongly oligarchic, family-based pattern of town leadership.<sup>2</sup>

The strong sense of "townsmanship" demonstrated by the Hingham leadership offers a reason why they felt

1 Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferral of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century*, (1981), Chapter 3. Allen's concern is not with the militia case, and any errors in the application of his conclusions to the present context are not his responsibility.

2 Allen, *In English Ways*, 71, 68.



perfectly justified in changing their minds over the captaincy, and why they responded vehemently when the central colony government objected to that choice. Equally, though, the close-knit community would provide support for the leadership regardless of the outcome of the militia case. Whatever the fines and censure heaped on the leaders of Hingham by the General Court, they could be sure of retaining their positions of local authority.

The contrast with the position of the Remonstrants could hardly be more marked. The men who signed the Remonstrance of 1646 were not part of a loyal community, or even a single social or religious grouping. The seven signatories included Robert Child, a medical doctor and scientist; Thomas Fowle and David Yale, who were both merchants; Thomas Burton, a lawyer; Samuel Maverick, a long-time opponent of Massachusetts who was in the region before the Winthrop-led settlement; John Dand, an ageing grocer; and John Smith, who had recently moved to Rhode Island but returned to Boston to participate in the dispute. Only Burton had clear Presbyterian religious convictions, Maverick was an Anglican, and Fowle and Yale were Congregationalists who believed in religious toleration.<sup>1</sup> Their only real unifying idea was that Massachusetts was acting in violation of English law and that the restrictive oligarchy running the colony was harming the economic and political progress of the settlement. The Remonstrants certainly could not claim the sort of local power-base and sympathy commanded by the Hingham leadership, and when their petition was condemned by the General Court they had no loyal constituency to fall back on for support. In such

1 For biographical sketches of the Remonstrants, see Wall, *Massachusetts Bay*, 235-239. The significance of the merchants' participation is noted by Bernard Bailyn, who argues that merchants were generally excluded from the political process in early Massachusetts. See Bailyn, *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, (1955), 107.



circumstances the dispatch of an agent to England was the only hope of keeping the issue alive.

For disaffected groups in Massachusetts, therefore, there were often various options available before a mission to England had to be considered. This was also true for some of the developing settlements around the Narragansett Bay. The difference was that in these towns, which would after a difficult period unite to form Rhode Island, the possibility of a colonial solution tended to disappear much more quickly, forcing a mission to England.

The most serious crisis of the period stemmed from William Coddington's claim to be Governor of Aquidneck Island, and both Coddington and his opponents sought help in London. As in Massachusetts, though, there was also a range of other disputes which did not acquire a transatlantic dimension. Even these tended to be more serious than the Bay Colony's squabbles, because various groups of Narragansett settlers at one time or another appealed to other New England colonies for help against their neighbours. Such opportunistic alliances often had severe implications for the stability of the region in the longer term and contributed to the need for most of the agencies of this period. In this section, however, the particular internal problems of the Rhode Island towns need to be considered.

By the early 1640s four major groups of Rhode Islanders had significantly different ideas about the direction in which the colony should move. Newport and Portsmouth were united under the leadership of William Coddington. Coddington's regime had been unpopular in the late 1630s, and would be so again, but Aquidneck was from an early date the most economically advanced part of the Narragansett region, and politically the best organised. Providence was the largest of the mainland settlements, but was itself divided between a majority which generally looked to Roger Williams for leadership, and a minority faction from Pawtuxet, led by the Arnold family. The

fourth element in the equation was the growing community at Shawomet which followed Samuel Gorton, both spiritually and politically.

The internal problems of the Rhode Island towns in the later 1640s are a telling demonstration that colonial charters could not in themselves solve the problems of fledgling settlements. The 1644 Patent acquired by Roger Williams gave the Narragansett towns legal standing, but only the colonists themselves could translate the model into a working political entity. They were slow to do so, and the fragile union which they created in 1647 did not survive into the next decade. When Rhode Islanders appealed to England again in 1651, the fact that the two main parts of the colony could not cooperate over sending an agent is a fitting conclusion to more than a decade of political failure in the region.

The key to the inability of the 1644 Patent to unite the Rhode Island groups lies with the character and ambitions of William Coddington. Coddington looms large over the early history of Rhode Island, and his career is central to understanding the fragmented nature of the colony in its first decades.<sup>1</sup> It is not an easy career to understand, because it contains some contradictions and a number of strangely obvious mistakes. On the other hand, the troubles of the 1650s cannot be blamed exclusively on Coddington: other Rhode Islanders failed to find ways of accommodating Coddington's aims in a manner which would have saved them all much trouble in the longer term.

Coddington led the group of Antinomians who left Boston to settle on Aquidneck in 1638 in the wake of the Hutchinson crisis. He had been a magistrate in Massachusetts, and was a wealthy merchant who had clear ideas about the economic potential of the Narragansett Bay. In short, Coddington was a valuable asset to a group

1 There is no recent biography of William Coddington. Treatments include Henry E. Turner, *William Coddington in Rhode Island Colonial Affairs*, (1878); Emily Coddington Williams, *William Coddington of Rhode Island: A Sketch*, (1941).

of settlers seeking leadership, and outshone his fellow refugees in terms of political experience and motivation.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, nobody believed in Coddington's abilities as a leader more strongly than Coddington himself. The dominant consideration in all of Coddington's actions was the maintenance of his social and political position. Some of his thinking is revealed by his actions in the later stages of the Antinomian crisis which split Boston in 1637/8. Coddington was among the closest of Anne Hutchinson's supporters, but some leaders of the Bay Colony, including the elder Winthrop, believed that he could be brought back into the fold.<sup>2</sup> Coddington was certainly unsure of the prospect of moving south to the Narragansett Bay, having a lot to lose by leaving Boston. Before the Antinomian crisis, he had been Treasurer of the Bay Colony, and was also prominent in government at town level in Boston. Ending up on the losing side of the Hutchinson dispute was certain to postpone (at the very least) any further advancement in colonial office. By contrast, the Aquidneck settlers were willing to appoint Coddington 'judge', effectively making him chief executive of the new colony. Coddington's affection for political power is well demonstrated in the course of the later 1640s and 1650s, and there is every reason to believe that he preferred the certainty of high office on Aquidneck to the possibility of political oblivion in Boston. Another factor encouraging Coddington to move was the potential of the Narragansett Bay as an

1 Coddington's wealth is revealed by the sale of some his Boston property for £1300 when he left for Aquidneck; he was also the highest ranking political figure in the Bay to join the Rhode Island settlers. See Edward West, "New Interpretations of the Records of the Island of Rhode Island." *RIHS Collections* 32 (1939): 107-115.

2 Emery Battis places Coddington in the core group of the Hutchinson movement. See Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, 229-30.

agricultural and mercantile centre.<sup>1</sup>

It rapidly became clear to the settlers on Aquidneck that Coddington intended to exercise a control over the new colony which did not differ notably from the powers claimed by their erstwhile leaders in Massachusetts. Within a year of the establishment of Portsmouth, a split with Anne Hutchinson signalled the beginning of Coddington's gradual alienation from the rest of the Narragansett settlers, and established some of the grievances which would divide the colony's factions for almost a quarter of a century. Coddington, who still had more than half of the Aquidneck settlers on his side, left Portsmouth to establish Newport at the south end of the island. The details of the splits on Aquidneck are not central to this study: it is sufficient to note that Coddington waited patiently until Hutchinson's family moved to Long Island, and then rapidly regained much of his old power over the whole island.<sup>2</sup>

Once back in control, a series of incidents began to persuade Coddington that close political contact with the mainland settlers could only result in the decline of his own influence and power. In 1639 he clashed directly for the first time with the recently arrived Samuel Gorton, and banished him from Aquidneck as a disturbing influence. As will be seen in the next section, persecuting Gorton was likely to make Coddington many friends on the mainland, but neither he nor they thought to build on this. Instead, Coddington saw Gorton

1 Negotiations between the Antinomians and the Indians who controlled Aquidneck were conducted by Randall Holden, who later became a leading Gortonist. See *RI Rec I*: 45, 47. Carl Bridenbaugh argues that Coddington was "the foremost stockman- agriculturalist in fact- in all New England". See Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton and Liberty of Conscience*, (1974), 19.

2 Theodore Bozeman contrasts Coddington's role in dividing the colony with Roger Williams' attempts to unite it; this is borne out by Coddington's affection for personal power and Williams' tendency to avoid it. See Bozeman "Religious Liberty and the Problem of Order in Early Rhode Island." *NEQ* 45 (1972): 48-9.



establish a new settlement at Shawomet with the approval of Providence, and concluded that any contact with the mainland would inevitably involve some compromise with the despised Gortonists.

Even more seriously, Roger Williams' 1644 Patent contained some ominous clauses for Coddington. The Patent considered the English settlements in the Narragansett region as one entity: while Newport, Portsmouth and Providence were named in the document, powers of government were conferred to the "Incorporation of Providence Plantations" as a whole. The form of government was left to the choice of a majority of the settlers, and by the time an attempt was made by representatives of the towns to establish a union in 1647, Coddington's worst fears seemed to be realised. Not only would each of the three original towns have an equal part in the government of the colony, but Gorton's Shawomet was admitted to full membership.

Perhaps the other Narragansett settlers could have kept Coddington on board by offering him the Presidency of the new union. This would not have been outrageous. Of the most notable alternatives, Samuel Gorton was absent in England in 1647, and Roger Williams was always reluctant to accept political office.<sup>1</sup> However, the colony appointed John Coggeshall in the first year, and only chose Coddington in 1648. By that time it was too late: Coddington had already broken with the new colony and had begun to seek support elsewhere for a new, independent colony of Aquidneck, with himself as Governor.

Importantly, Coddington did not immediately go to England but rather approached the United Colonies. Relying on his continuing contacts with John Winthrop and other Massachusetts leaders, he hoped to find a solution to the problem in the colonies. Coddington and his

1 Williams devoted the years between his two agency missions to developing his trading post and played little part in public affairs. See Samuel Brockunier, *Roger Williams: the Irrepressible Democrat*, (1940), 185.



supporter Alexander Partridge travelled to the Commissioners meeting at Plymouth in September 1648, and requested that Aquidneck be granted membership of the United Colonies.<sup>1</sup> The Commissioners called Coddington's bluff, and invited Aquidneck to submit itself to Plymouth's jurisdiction instead: this was clearly little improvement on having Aquidneck be part of the new Narragansett colony.

Despite the Commissioners' rejection of his terms, Coddington's appeal to the United Colonies was in itself guaranteed to unite the Rhode Islanders against him. Having alienated his fellow colonists and failed in his bid for equal membership of the United Colonies, Coddington sailed for England to seek support there. In October 1650, he was granted a commission as Governor of Aquidneck, and the following year returned to Rhode Island to try to enforce his new found authority.

It was this commission from the English government which finally persuaded the Narragansett colonists that they needed a voice of their own across the Atlantic if they were to solve the continuing problems surrounding Coddington's role in Rhode Island affairs. It soon emerged that Coddington had little support in the colony, and he left for Massachusetts when this became obvious. Nonetheless, Coddington's de facto resignation did not encourage the colonists to simply ignore the matter. In part, the dispatch of agents may be a measure of respect for the English authorities, and a general reluctance to risk the displeasure of the Council of State. Many colonists believed that they had benefited from the contacts established with England's leaders by Roger Williams and the Gortonists, and did not wish to jeopardise such links in the future. In addition, there were more immediate practical reasons. As Governor of Aquidneck, Coddington might have tried once more to become a member of the United Colonies, and Rhode

1 See *Plymouth Rec* IX: 110.

Islanders hoped to overthrow his authority before he was able to persuade Massachusetts to give him military assistance.

Even when facing the potential chaos created by Coddington's actions, though, the Narragansett settlers failed to agree on anything except their opposition to Aquidneck's new Governor. Such was the suspicion and mistrust between the two halves of the colony that even the goodwill generated by the 1647 union was insufficient to make the Rhode Island towns pool resources following Coddington's return with his Governorship in 1651. Both the mainland and island towns sent an agent of their own, and disagreements over the exact aims of each mission continued to haunt agents Williams and Clarke.

While Coddington's activities therefore gave rise to two of Rhode Island's agencies, he cannot be held solely responsible for the colony's problems. His acquisition of an English commission was the element which set this dispute above all others, but even after Coddington left Rhode Island in 1652, the mainland and island towns found it hard to work together. Providence settler Robert Williams appealed for an end to the on-going "wilful and unprofitable strifings and contentions" between the towns, but had no immediate success.<sup>1</sup> The fact remains, though, that none of Rhode Island's other internal crises provoked a mission to England. Such intense localism might not have been such a problem for the settlers if they had not faced persistent interference in their internal affairs by Massachusetts. It was the continuing involvement of outside elements in Rhode Island that created the greatest need for agents, and it is to these issues that the next section turns.

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If Rhode Islanders lacked the safety nets available to

<sup>1</sup> See Williams to town of Portsmouth, 15 March 1653, in John Hay Library, MSS Rhode Island collection.

some elements in Massachusetts, disputes among the Narragansett Bay communities also had other characteristics which made them inherently more serious. Most Rhode Island troubles had an external element, and the first three decades of the colony's history are marked by malevolent meddling from outside, most often from Massachusetts. Worse still, the Bay Colony had a number of sympathisers in Rhode Island who were always willing to create difficulties for those trying to establish a stable government incorporating all four towns. Massachusetts was keen to encourage such divisions, because they helped disguise its wider efforts to annex the Narragansett region.

Rhode Island faced threats from various quarters. The Narragansett region was home to some of the United Colonies' worst fears, and also offered some tantalising opportunities. The area was of great natural value, with good soil and safe harbours. Unfortunately for Massachusetts and its supporters, the resident population consisted of the powerful Narragansett tribe, and what was perceived to be a motley assortment of heretics and refugees from Bay Colony justice. This population, Indian and English alike, posed a range of problems for the more orthodox colonies, and suffered repeated attempts in the 1640s to evict them. This section considers the tensions between the United Colonies and the Rhode Island inhabitants, and the frequent decisions of the latter to seek help from England.

By the beginning of the 1640s the United Colonies had eliminated the Pequot Indians of southern Connecticut as a military force and were poised to move against the Narragansett. The Indian dimension is important to this story, for a number of reasons. First, the Narragansett were a numerous and militarily powerful people. The question of population has long been part of the anthropological debate over the nature of Indian society, but the exact figures, even if they were available, are in fact less important than the English perception of

Narragansett strength. The English colonies had gained a good impression of the tribe when they employed them as allies in the Pequot War, and saw them as a significant force. Five hundred Narragansett helped in the sack of the Mystic river village in May 1637. Later, after alliances had shifted, the tribe sent twice that number to attack the Bay's Mohegan ally Uncas in the spring of 1645.<sup>1</sup>

Almost as threatening as their military capability was the Narragansett's understanding of the political and diplomatic tensions of the New England colonies. Initial English settlement around the Narragansett Bay was closely monitored by tribal leaders. Roger Williams negotiated with the Indians for the purchase of the land which became Providence, and also acted as an intermediary between the Narragansett and the next wave of refugees, who bought Aquidneck in 1638. Williams made an effort to learn the Narragansett language and understand the tribal culture during his early years in Rhode Island, and the Indians recognised him as a useful intermediary between themselves and the more hostile settlers of Massachusetts. Williams helped forge the alliance between the Bay Colony and the Narragansett against the latter's old enemy, the Pequot. In the aftermath of that conflict, the Narragansett began to doubt whether their alliance with the Bay was safe and sensible, but Williams continued to be useful to them as an interpreter and mediator. The Indians were also well aware that the English settlers were by no means united, and their willingness to work with the dissident communities of Rhode Island against the orthodox colonies demonstrates a political sophistication which caught

1 Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 220; LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 222.

Massachusetts off guard.<sup>1</sup>

Just as the Pequot had stood in the way of English expansion south from Connecticut, so the Narragansett occupied equally desirable territory. The quality of the land on the islands and western shore of Narragansett Bay escaped neither the Rhode Island settlers nor their erstwhile governors in Massachusetts. As has been noted, the members of the Hutchinson faction who left the Bay Colony in 1638 were well aware of the potential of their destination. The settlers of Aquidneck Island did not leave Boston to cower in the wilderness, but rather took full advantage of the natural resources suddenly available to them. The successes of the Aquidneck settlers were visible from an early date, and the mainland followed the island's pattern of economic growth, albeit much more slowly. By the late 1650s, the tract of land known as the Narragansett Country was settled by competing groups of Rhode Islanders and speculators from Massachusetts and Connecticut alike. In particular, members of the Atherton Company claimed title to much of the region's prime land after conducting a number of illicit deals with Indians. Rhode Island claimed the same territory under the terms of its 1644 patent, and had a variety of treaties of its own with local Indians. The Narragansett Country emerged as a central issue in the Restoration, when Rhode Island agent John Clarke opposed a Connecticut attempt to annex the region.<sup>2</sup>

As well as economic potential, the Narragansett region offered important strategic benefits to whoever controlled it, and Massachusetts feared that it could

1 Sidney James argues that "it is quite realistic to think of the colony of Rhode Island as in part a product of Narragansett Indian policy." James, *Colonial Rhode Island: A History*, (1975), 8. Williams' role as a mediator is explored in the editorial note "Indian affairs and the Threat of War, 1645", in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 220-224.

2 See Chapter 7, below.



easily fall to a hostile power. In 1644 the elder John Winthrop warned his fellow colonists against being too hostile toward the Aquidneck settlers, lest the latter seek the support of the Dutch at New Amsterdam. Early in the following decade, William Arnold wrote to Massachusetts noting that the Narragansett Bay would "serve for an inroad to let in forces to over-run the whole country" if the English republic decided to act against New England.<sup>1</sup>

Such a naval strike would be deeply worrying, but Massachusetts was even more concerned by the thought that Rhode Islanders might actually welcome the sort of invasion described by Arnold. Rhode Island was widely regarded as <sup>a</sup>source of disruption over all New England. It was a haven for "fugitives and such as are guilty of capital crimes and other misdemeanours", according to a complaint from Connecticut in 1651. Earlier, New Haven had censured one of its colonists for sedition, and noted without surprise that the woman concerned had connections with Rhode Island. The United Colonies considered Rhode Island to be a threat both to internal stability and also to their image in England. Trying to solve the former problem by persecution only exacerbated the latter, however, because the more the United Colonies tried to stamp out dissent in New England, the more likely it was that agents would be sent to England.

Some of the most revealing instances of the overlap between Rhode Island's internal disputes and the wider concerns of the United Colonies are to be found in the long-running conflict between Samuel Gorton and Massachusetts. Gorton's clash with William Coddington on Aquidneck has already been mentioned, and it was this which forced the Gortonists to settle on the mainland. Once there, they became embroiled in what was potentially an even more serious conflict, because it ultimately brought Gorton into direct confrontation with

<sup>1</sup> See Winthrop, *Journal* II: 175; Arnold to Massachusetts, 1 September 1651, in *Hutchinson Papers*, I: 267-268.

Massachusetts. William Arnold's faction in the small settlement of Pawtuxet saw its position threatened by the arrival of the Gortonists. The Arnolds voluntarily placed themselves under the authority of Massachusetts in 1641 in the hope that the Bay Colony would remove the Gortonists and leave the northwest shore of Narragansett Bay available for occupation by themselves and their supporters.<sup>1</sup>

Such splits in the ranks of the Narragansett settlements were anathema to Roger Williams. Williams had himself been exasperated by Gorton, complaining that the latter was "bewitching and bemadding poor Providence" with his preaching of radical theology. Importantly, though, Williams refrained from signing a letter sent by some of the Providence settlers which complained to Massachusetts that Gorton was a threat to civil order. His subsequent disagreements with the Pawtuxet faction indicate that he recognised the dangerous possibility of external intervention which lay along such a path.<sup>2</sup>

As far as Gorton was concerned, the dispute with the Arnold faction and the subsequent conflict with the Massachusetts authorities was just the latest in a series of troubles which took on ever more dangerous aspects. Gorton's problems are an extreme example, but the reasoning behind his mission in 1645 offers a clear indication of the point at which all avenues of progress in the New World were perceived to have closed and redress was sought in England.

Gorton knew the methods and attitudes of the United Colonies better than most Rhode Islanders, having been on the wrong side of the authorities in Massachusetts and

1 William Arnold's letter to Massachusetts condemning Gorton as a "railing and turbulent person" was printed by Edward Winslow during the latter's English campaign against Gorton. See Winslow, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, (1647), 59-62.

2 See Williams to John Winthrop, 8 March 1640/41, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 215; Providence to Massachusetts, 17 November 1641, in Mass Archives, 2: 2.

Plymouth for most of his early years in New England.<sup>1</sup> Gorton arrived in Boston in March 1637, but was not involved in the Antinomian dispute. After witnessing at first hand the actions taken by the Massachusetts authorities against religious dissidents, though, Gorton moved quickly to New Plymouth. He was for a time welcomed by the separatist colony, but became involved in a court case in which one of his servants was charged with various disruptive activities. In Gorton's view, the charges stemmed from the single allegation that she had smiled during a church sermon. Gorton chose to speak on the woman's behalf, and ultimately took the case to the point where he called into question the legitimacy of the Plymouth legal process. He and his family were banished in December 1638, and the dispute over Gorton's servant was probably an excuse to rid the colony of a man who had started to practise the sort of unofficial ministry developed by Anne Hutchinson in Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> It is certainly true that the relatively trivial legal reasons for acting against Gorton at this point- and later- bear little relation to the severity of the punishments imposed upon him. Early in his New England career, therefore, Gorton saw how the colonies could use their civil laws to enforce religious conformity, and gradually came to the conclusion that English law and government would have to be involved in combating the activities of Massachusetts and its allies.

Given this background, Gorton must have been aware that the Arnold faction's submission to Massachusetts made direct conflict with the Bay Colony likely, if not

1 The summary which follows is based on accounts of Gorton's activities offered by Sidney James, *Colonial Rhode Island: A History*; and in greater detail by Kenneth W. Porter, "Samuell Gorton: New England Firebrand" *NEQ* 7 (1934): 405-444; Phillip Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory*, (1984), 277-282. Many original letters from Gorton's disputes are printed in his own *Simplicities Defence*, (1646).

2 Porter, "Samuell Gorton", 411.

inevitable. In the event, Massachusetts received pleas for help from two groups: junior Indian leaders who disagreed with Narragansett sachem Miantonomi's sale of Shawomet to the Gortonists complained to the Bay Colony also. The Bay ordered the Gortonists to come to trial in Boston, and received in reply a vitriolic letter addressed to the 'Idol General', in which the Massachusetts authorities were labelled friends of Judas Iscariot and murderers of Anne Hutchinson. In September 1643, the Bay sent troops to arrest nine Gortonists, who were then sentenced to work in irons before being exiled from Massachusetts and banned from returning to Shawomet.<sup>1</sup>

The spectacle of a community of vocal heretics prospering in the Narragansett country under English protection presented a serious problem for the Bay Colony. The Gortonists were different from the other groups which had left Massachusetts in the 1630s. William Coddington's Aquidneck settlers, once established in their new home, were happy to continue trade links and correspondence with their northern neighbours. Even Roger Williams, who had questioned the very legality of Massachusetts in the early 1630s, maintained a courteous dialogue with his former opponents in the years which followed.

Not so Gorton. The most worrying part of the Gorton problem was that he and his followers persisted in spreading sedition regardless of where they were or how severely they were being punished. When the Gortonists were in prison in Massachusetts after being evicted from their settlement, the hard line adopted by the magistrates did not meet with universal approval among the citizens of the Bay. Even from their captivity, the Gortonists were able to instil doubts in the minds of the locals. One of the advantages of Winthrop's *Journal* as a source is that the author's prejudices often led him to

<sup>1</sup> Agent Winslow presented the 'Idol General' letter to the English authorities as evidence of the Gortonists subversion; see Winslow, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, 28-36.



reveal information which in his eyes was highly critical of his enemies, but which may also cast light on the truth. In this case, Winthrop noted that the Gortonists were eventually banished from Massachusetts, because they were able to "corrupt some of our people, especially the women, by their heresies."<sup>1</sup>

Winthrop mentions this in order to condemn the Gortonists as raving disturbers of the peace, but it also indicates, of course, that a worrying number of people were willing to listen to what the Gortonists had to say. In addition, Winthrop was particularly haunted by the spectre of another subversive female threat following in the footsteps of Anne Hutchinson.<sup>2</sup> John Endecott complained that there were people in Salem who were "taken with Gorton's opinions."<sup>3</sup> It is unlikely that the Gortonists were simply preaching radical theology, although that would have been bad enough. The sect and its leader were noted for their belief that the secular order in New England, as well as Massachusetts Congregationalism, was corrupt and oppressive, having been vocal in this opinion in Plymouth and Aquidneck. The implications of all this were serious for the Bay Colony leadership, which was not sure enough of its own position to ignore the establishment of an English-supported community of religious and political dissenters on its southern border, expressing the sort of beliefs which evidently had some attraction for a section of the Massachusetts populace.

After their release from Massachusetts, therefore,

1 Winthrop, *Journal* II: 149.

2 Hutchinson herself was another dissident who never reconciled herself to the Bay, or to Coddington's collaborationist approach on Aquidneck. Mary Jane Lewis has suggested that Hutchinson's refusal to conform led the Bay Colony to order her execution, which was subsequently disguised by John Winthrop as a random killing by Indians. See Lewis, "A Sweet Sacrifice: Civil War in New England." PhD, SUNY Binghamton (1986).

3 See Endecott to John Winthrop, sr., 22 April 1644, in *Winthrop Papers* IV: 456.



the Gortonists were under no illusions that the Bay would leave them alone for long. A possible solution was suggested to the Shawomet settlers in the summer of 1644, when Roger Williams returned to Rhode Island with his parliamentary patent. This was the first real evidence in Rhode Island that England had a parliamentary authority which was sufficiently in control to issue such documents to petitioners, and as such probably gave Gorton considerable encouragement. It must be remembered that Gorton was a relatively late emigrant, unlike most of the leaders of New England, and had witnessed a wave of persecution in England in the early 1630s which had not begun when Winthrop's followers arrived in America. However frequently he asserted his determination to appeal to the English authorities, Gorton may well have been apprehensive about returning to London. After his narrow escape from execution at the hands of the Bay authorities, Gorton decided that the situation in New England was desperate enough, and English circumstances promising enough, to make his long-threatened appeal to England a viable option. In 1645 Gorton, Randall Holden and John Greene sailed for England from New Amsterdam.

The cumulative effect of the events of 1646 on the leaders of the Bay Colony was dramatic. As noted above, the Remonstrance was presented in May, and the magistrates spent much of the summer working on a response. At this time also, the activities of Gorton and his fellow agents in England began to worry the leaders of the United Colonies. In June, Plymouth magistrate Edward Winslow passed on news of the activities of the Gortonists in England to John Winthrop. Winslow urged the Massachusetts governor to be "better prepared (at least to stave off prejudice against your government in the committee of Parliament) in regard of the petitioners", and noted also that a number of other dissidents were preparing their cases.<sup>1</sup> In August, Theophilus Eaton wrote

1 Winslow to Winthrop 30 June 1646, in *Winthrop Papers* V: 87.

to Winthrop from New Haven in August, asking the Bay leader to keep him informed of the results of Gorton's mission: "It will be an exercise to us all", wrote Eaton, "if he returns with victory".<sup>1</sup>

Some Massachusetts settlers were less apprehensive about Gorton's activities, and viewed the controversy as an opportunity to expose the dissidents' 'errors' before the English public. According to William Pynchon, Gorton's actions would "open his infamy to the world", and "clear the justice of New England to the Parliament more than anything that man could have devised by that time the answer is returned."<sup>2</sup> Pynchon's belief that the English government would inevitably support the Bay once they had heard Gorton's heretical views was based on a serious misconception of the English situation in the mid-1640s, and was not shared by the majority of the colonial leadership. As the summer of 1646 progressed, John Winthrop and the Massachusetts authorities began to feel the pressure being exerted on them from many fronts. They also knew that their own actions over the preceding decade had led the colony far enough away from the norms of English government to make reliance on goodwill from home a very risky strategy.

Matters came to a head in September, when Gorton's fellow agent Randall Holden arrived in Massachusetts, carrying with him not only a free-conduct pass from the English authorities, but also a letter giving a preliminary judgement on the Gortonists' petition. This letter was categorical in its insistence that Massachusetts was acting outwith the bounds of its charter, and that the Bay Colony should immediately desist from interfering with the Shawomet settlers.<sup>3</sup> For a

1 Eaton to Winthrop 6 August 1646, in *Winthrop Papers* V: 95.

2 Pynchon to John Winthrop 7 July 1646, in *Winthrop Papers* V: 92.

3 Warwick Commission to Massachusetts, 15 May 1646 in Winthrop, *Journal* II: 292-3.

small group of religious sectarians to gain such a decision against the flagship of New England colonisation did not augur well for Massachusetts, and some counter had to be made.

The internal and external threats which surfaced in 1646 persuaded Massachusetts to send Edward Winslow to England. Much of the thinking behind this mission survives, primarily in the writings of John Winthrop and of the agent himself. One of the agent's priorities was to put a stop to the succession of protests being lodged against the Bay Colony in England. Winslow lost no time in making his appeal to the parliamentary commissioners, urging them to consider

how destructive it will prove to the well-being of our plantations and proceedings there, (who by God's blessing are growing up into a nation) here to answer to the complaints of such malignant spirits as shall there be censured by authority, it being three thousand miles distant, so far as will undo any to come for justice, utterly disabling them to prove the equity of their cause, unless their estate be very great.<sup>1</sup>

Winslow cleverly side-stepped the real issues by focusing on the cost and inconvenience of having to answer criticisms at transatlantic distances. His tone reflects the wider themes of the Bay Colony's appeal, suggesting that the godly settlers of Massachusetts are doing their best in their humble manner to establish their new communities, and should not be deflected from that task by the activities of malcontents like Gorton. Some of the Bay leadership may even have believed this picture, although the preparations for Winslow's mission imply rather less innocent thinking.

John Winthrop records in his *Journal* the formal commission given to Winslow to approach the English authorities and defend the charter rights of the Bay Colony, but he also lists another set of instructions for the agent which reveal those areas of policy in which

1 Winslow, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, Epistle Dedicatory (n.p.).

Massachusetts was consciously at variance with opinion and practice in England. The magistrates anticipated that their colony might be accused of having an arbitrary government, and of wanting to extend its boundaries. In addition, the whole question of allegiance to England clearly troubled the Bay leadership. Winslow's instructions were clear, however. He was to stress repeatedly that the colony intended to maintain its charter-derived right of "absolute power of government", and make no concession to any attempts to bring the settlement's laws and practices into line with those of England.<sup>1</sup> Winslow was sent to England by a colonial leadership which had gone to considerable effort to build up political and economic power and was determined not to allow any diminution of its new-found authority.

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After the return of the first Rhode Island agents, therefore, the process of transatlantic appeals began to acquire its own momentum. As well as long-standing grievances, constitutional worries and economic problems, the results of previous missions came to be numbered among the factors influencing the dispatch of new agents. Agents went to England throughout this period without ever being really sure of what they would encounter in their home country. Changes of government, as well as pressing concerns both in Parliament and on the battlefields of the civil war, combined to make the achievements- if any- of an agent impossible to predict. Particularly in the years after 1642, when English Parliamentarians began to issue orders to their New World brethren, colonial leaders paid considerable attention to the results of their own previous missions and those of their opponents when deciding future action.

Had Gorton's petition been rejected by the English

1 Winthrop, *Journal* II: 314-315.

authorities, forcing him to stay in England or move to, say, Long Island, the reasons for Edward Winslow's mission would have been dramatically reduced in number and significance. Equally, with Gorton absent, William Coddington would have faced less opposition in Rhode Island and might have decided that his appeal to England for increased personal authority was unnecessary: Rhode Island might have been united without the two 1651 missions. Clearly, this is speculative, but the success and failure of colonial agents did have considerable repercussions for their own communities and for the wider history of New England. With the affairs and interests of every colony so closely interconnected, the actions of colonial agents came to be a prime reason for the dispatch of future missions.



## The Agents: A Portrait

Once the colonial leadership had overcome the doubts and disagreements examined in the last chapter, and decided that a mission to England was necessary, the next step was to appoint an agent. This part of the process was in some cases the most difficult. Agents had to be suitable representatives in the eyes of the colonial authorities, and also had to impress England's leaders. The English background, colonial activities and religious beliefs of an individual could all have an effect on his standing in the colony, and matters were complicated by the realisation that England itself might judge these factors by different standards. In a time of ecclesiastical and political upheaval, colonists rightly believed that the messenger could be as important as the message, and choosing an agent was therefore a matter of some gravity.

The selection of agents posed two main problems for colonies. First, agents had to be sufficiently influential and trustworthy to perform their missions but not so valuable that they were indispensable to the everyday governance of the colony itself. Agents all came from the ruling groups of colonial society: the record is clear that all were leading figures in their communities before being appointed agents. They were not, however, at the very top of the hierarchy at the time of their missions, and colonies were generally successful in reaching a balanced solution to the problem of indispensability.

Second, colonies had to select agents who were appropriate for the particular situation. As has been

seen, most missions had broadly constitutional undercurrents, but circumstances and priorities could change dramatically from mission to mission. Equally important was the background of change in England. Agents had to be qualified to deal with the task at hand and also command the sort of authority which would elicit a favourable response from England's leaders, whoever they might be. Most agents had proven records of representing their colonies, either on previous missions to England or (more usually) on diplomatic expeditions elsewhere in the colonies. Nonetheless, such experience was not considered as valuable as general leadership qualities.

Some of the difficulties caused by the debate over missions themselves spilled over into the discussion about agents. Factionalism and localism played their part in the selection of agents, with central authorities having to be careful not to alienate local interests through the choice of an agent. Colonies generally learned to be diplomatic, but there are also cases in which compromise candidates were chosen. Although no mission failed because of this, the tendency of colonies to follow easy options could store up trouble for the future.

Colonies were greatly helped in agent selection by the strong opinions held by some potential agents. Many agents actively volunteered for their missions because their presence in London would also allow them to participate in English affairs. At the same time, some of the most powerful and influential colonials refused to be considered as agents. The motives of both these groups may have been more selfish than community oriented, but they helped ensure that agency missions did not leave gaps in the uppermost echelons of colonial government, and that colonies rarely had to force men into becoming unwilling and possibly uncommitted agents.

Those men who volunteered for missions help make the point that New England's agents often had broadly

ranging careers and interests which mirror the transatlantic nature of the agency as an institution. For most agents in the mid-seventeenth century, working for their colony was only part of a much more diverse set of concerns that spanned the ocean. In addition, the experiences of agents in England indicate that they had a lot in common with one another, despite the conflicts between and within their respective colonies. As time went on, however, it was possible for men with superficially similar early careers to have radically different views about the state of colonial society, and competing agents in England were no exception.

The debate over agent selection typifies some wider characteristics of settlement in New England and the development of the region's social and political institutions. There were not enough agents in the first generation for them to be statistically significant, but they do demonstrate in microcosm some important features. One point to emerge from this study is that colonies had similar attitudes toward leadership and their choice of those who would represent them in England. The origins of the northern colonies, first in a relatively small geographical, social and religious section of English society, and then at the point of primary migration in Massachusetts, ensured that all the region's settlements inherited some uniform approaches. It is indicative of the ambiguities of colonial relations in the region that settlements which were bitterly opposed to one another chose their representatives in a broadly similar manner, with generally comparable priorities.

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The most important compromise in agent selection centred on the problem of indispensability. On the one hand, there was the potential loss of an individual's services to the everyday running of the colony, while on the

other was the possible benefit to be gained from using his skills in the colony's interest in London. The main difficulty was that, logically enough, those who made good agents would probably also make good colony officers. Leading men could be trusted with the concerns of the colonial elite, and might also command some respect in England, but such figures were probably already serving in the colonial government either at legislative or executive level. Any sensible fledgling colony was bound to try to maintain or even expand its pool of experienced, trusted statesmen, and could not lightly send its best and brightest across the Atlantic on lengthy missions. Clearly, some balance had to be reached: colonies had to find men who were in the upper echelons of colonial government and society but, for one reason or another, were not considered indispensable.

At first glance, the New England colonies seem spoilt for choice when trying to recruit agents. Massachusetts in particular had no shortage of leading figures with experience of life in England and, by the time of the first mission, more than a decade of colonial service as well. The Bay Colony settlers had elected leaders before they left for America and later formed a variety of colony-wide and local institutions. Later offshoot colonies organised representative assemblies of their own, and the region as a whole boasted rather more educated men with some social standing than was the norm in the American colonies. In addition, all first generation settlers who made the Atlantic crossing as adults had some knowledge of English affairs, and those who had been merchants, lawyers or ministers were often very knowledgeable indeed. Leading New England settlers were likely to emigrate in family and community units, but not all members of any given family or social circle would cross the Atlantic: most colonists left a range of contacts behind them. Ministers left aristocratic patrons, members of old congregations and episcopal opponents in

England; the region's merchants maintained links with business partners, creditors and debtors; many people in the colonies tried to keep in touch with members of their extended families.

Before examining why only a small percentage of these people were ever considered as agents, some qualifications need to be made. There is the ever-present problem of negative evidence: just because a person was never named as a candidate does not mean that the person was unsuitable. He may simply have been overlooked. In addition, while some professions are well represented among agents, it cannot be assumed that every member of that profession was a potential agent. Some generalisations can nevertheless be made about the first generation agents, as long as it is remembered that the agency was not in itself a well-defined profession with set membership qualifications.

The most important general characteristic shared by the agents is that they were all members of the elite from which the rest of the colonial office-holders were also chosen. The first generation agents were all born and educated in England, and either held positions of influence prior to emigration, or emerged as leaders of their new communities shortly after arriving in America. There are various measures of this status, some of which will be considered below.

Although the agents are an unreliably small sample, their English origins fit well with more general trends in the New England population. While the colonies attracted settlers from most parts of England, ruling elites tended to have more closely limited regional origins. The early coastal counties of Massachusetts were led by emigrants from the eastern counties of England, and it is no surprise that they were usually



represented by agents of similar origin.<sup>1</sup> Of course, colonial leaders did not deliberately seek out agents who had come from specific English regions: the pattern of regional origins is instead a reflection of the fact that colonies generally chose agents from the ranks of their leading citizens.

Most Massachusetts agents came from those English regions which contributed most to the Great Migration. Simon Bradstreet and John Leveret came from Lincolnshire, Thomas Weld from Suffolk, and John Norton from Hertfordshire. Hugh Peter was born in Cornwall, but lived and worked in Essex. Connecticut's John Winthrop, jr., came from Suffolk. Rhode Island agents John Greene and Randall Holden both came from Wiltshire, which contributed a large number of settlers who subsequently moved on from Massachusetts to Connecticut and Rhode Island. Some agents came from places rarely associated with New England: Plymouth settler (and Massachusetts agent) Edward Winslow was born in Worcestershire and Rhode Island's Samuel Gorton in Lancashire. Even these men lived in London- the clearing-house of much American emigration- before leaving England, as did Rhode Island's founder Roger Williams.

Leadership could of course manifest itself in various forms in early New England, and agents represent two main strands and also two which were less common. All will be considered in more detail below, but in summary they are: holders of civil office at either colony, local or inter-colony level; ministers and religious leaders, whether of the established church or of dissenting sects; military officers; and, finally, holders of economic influence such as merchants. Some agents could claim authority by virtue of more than one of these, and some thought needs to be given to which,

1 David Fischer considers the numerical importance of eastern settlers in early Massachusetts, and argues that their political and cultural influence was even more significant. See Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 31-36.

if any, was the most important consideration in such cases.

First, agents who were chosen from the ranks of civil officeholders. As has been suggested, all the colonies had to face the problem of choosing agents from their leading figures without dangerously weakening the colony, and their final choices reflect the priorities of early colonial government. Not all colonies, however, suffered from exactly the same constraints. The smaller settlements tended to be reliant on a very small number of leaders, and this is especially true of the Rhode Island towns and other fringe communities formed by followers of a particular religious leader. Massachusetts, on the other hand, had more people to choose from but tended to suffer from factional and localist disagreements.

Some of the Bay Colony's disputes over the dispatch of missions have already been considered, but despite the sometimes strained circumstances surrounding the agency, Massachusetts always succeeded in reaching a compromise between political seniority and indispensability in its choice of agents. No Governor or Deputy Governor travelled to England in this period, and although agents were experienced political figures, they were not selected from the very top grades of the Massachusetts government. Agents usually only gained promotion to the uppermost offices after they returned from their missions. William Hibbins, for example, was a leading figure in the Boston Town Council from 1639 onward, and was usually listed second only to the elder John Winthrop in Council meeting attendance lists in the early 1640s.<sup>1</sup> However, Hibbins' election to colony-wide office had to wait until after he returned from England in 1642. Twenty years later, colony magistrate Simon Bradstreet became the highest ranking of all the Bay

<sup>1</sup> Lists of meeting attendances are given in Robert F. Seybolt, *Town Officials of Colonial Boston 1634-1775*, (1939).

Colony's agents. Bradstreet went on to be Governor of Massachusetts in the 1670s, as did his predecessor in the agency John Leveret, but both men only reached this pinnacle of colonial government in the years following their missions.

The clearest demonstration of the indispensability problem- and the cleverest solution to it- is found in the Bay Colony's 1646 mission. The situation in 1646 was traumatic for the Massachusetts leadership, with Samuel Gorton lobbying the English government and the dissident Remonstrants threatening to add a further voice to the Bay's critics across the ocean. Matters seemed so serious that a section of the colony hierarchy believed that only their most distinguished leaders would command sufficient respect to influence the English authorities. The elder Winthrop was warned of the Gortonists' activities in England by, among others, Plymouth settler Edward Winslow. Winslow kept himself well informed of events in both England and in the rest of the colonies, and believed that the Bay Colony could not rely on sympathisers in England to present its case. The Gortonists were having a powerful influence on England's leaders, argued Winslow, and the matter was "of such consequence if well weighed as your ablest men may not escape it".<sup>1</sup> This view had supporters in Massachusetts. One of the elders attending the General Court meeting in November 1646 suggested that a churchman and a senior magistrate should go to England: the court chose John Norton, teacher at the church in Ipswich, and Governor John Winthrop, sr.<sup>2</sup>

However much support there was at the General Court for the idea that very senior figures should serve as agents, the suggestion that Winthrop himself might go to England caused widespread alarm. There had already been

1 Winslow to John Winthrop, sr., 30 June 1646, in *Winthrop Papers* V: 87.

2 The General Court proceedings are described in Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 295.

calls from England for him to return and lend his support to the Parliamentary cause. Even a short departure from the colony might panic some settlers into believing that the leadership had lost confidence in the settlement, thus encouraging them to leave also. William Pynchon had observed shortly before the Court meeting that some of those already returning to England were men whom "the land can ill spare without a shaking ague: the pillars of the land seem to tremble."<sup>1</sup>

Pynchon's words seem hyperbolic, but they reflect the crisis of confidence which both stemmed from and contributed to the large scale remigration to England which emerged as a serious problem in the 1640s.<sup>2</sup> The first Massachusetts agents had tried to play down the significance of remigration by offering some explanations for the large number of people abandoning the Bay Colony. Many had never intended to stay long in the new world, they argued, and some were deterred by the moral nature of colonial society. Ironically, agents Weld and Peter had become part of the problem by 1646, and the Bay was very conscious of the fact that two of its first three agents had remained in England to support Parliament. Winthrop and Norton might not voluntarily have followed the example set by Peter and Weld, but colonists feared that events in England could take such a turn as to give them little choice.

Winthrop himself was reluctant to undertake the mission, for various reasons. According to his own account, he was concerned about his advancing age, and it is true that at fifty-eight he would have been the oldest of all Massachusetts agents. Probably more important was Winthrop's political position: he had only recently been re-elected Governor following the Hingham dispute, and may have feared further attempts to remove

1 William Pynchon to John Winthrop, sr., 27 October 1646, in *Winthrop Papers*, V: 114.

2 Remigration will be considered in more detail in Chapter 5.

him from office if he accepted even a short mission to England.<sup>1</sup>

Given Winthrop's reluctance, it is likely that he personally argued that Edward Winslow be chosen for the mission in his place: Winthrop certainly favoured Winslow's appointment and considered him a strong bulwark of orthodoxy in Plymouth Colony, which itself seemed increasingly buffeted by heresy. In other ways, too, Winslow offered Massachusetts the ideal solution to its predicament. He was a man of considerable standing in government, as a magistrate and one of the original Commissioners of the United Colonies. However, he did all these things as a freeman of New Plymouth, and not of Massachusetts. The Bay Colony therefore got an agent with an impressive governmental background without causing a gap in the ranks of its own elite.

The Rhode Island towns faced the same indispensability question, although some of the attendant difficulties were of a rather different nature. In the first place, the Narragansett communities recognised early that sending leading figures to England was necessary for survival, and did not share the Bay Colony's insecurity about remigration and demonstrations of 'weakness' on the part of the authorities. Still, Rhode Island had a much less organised political structure throughout most of this period, and this made leadership an even more cherished commodity. Very few men could claim a broad authority over any of the Narragansett settlements, let alone an alliance of them.

Rhode Island agents were, like their Bay Colony counterparts, slightly adrift from the uppermost ranks of government. In large part their selection was dictated by the way in which political structures developed in the colony. Individual towns were always determined to maintain their own powers and authority, and this made them unwilling to send their leaders on

1 See Winthrop, *Journal* II: 295.



missions. Only if a given mission was clearly necessary to their own town might local leaders travel to England. By the same token, anyone who could be trusted to represent the towns in alliance was probably not involved in the everyday governance of any one of them.

Roger Williams, Rhode Island's first agent, was probably the only Narragansett settler of the first generation to command near universal respect from his fellow colonists. This was due to the sympathy generated by his exile from the Bay Colony, his determination to establish the township at Providence, and the assistance he offered in the 1630s to most of the other major groups who wished to settle in the region. The Antinomian refugees who founded the Aquidneck towns were particularly grateful for Williams' ability to negotiate with local Indians.

Williams' role as a political leader in his own town of Providence was always ambiguous, however, and he was by no means typical of the rest of the mainland leadership in this period. He is one of the few examples of a leader who lacked many of the usual qualifications of social status and relative wealth.<sup>1</sup> Spending much of his time at his trading post in the Narragansett Country, Williams was never as closely involved with the day-to-day affairs of Providence as might be inferred from his high historiographical profile.

<sup>1</sup> Most Providence town officers were older and wealthier than the average settler, although Robert Brunkow argues that the town electorate did not hesitate to remove men from this elite who proved to be ineffective. In general, the Rhode Island towns were governed by men of "property, maturity and experience". See Robert Brunkow, "Office Holding in Providence, RI 1646-1686: A Quantitative Analysis." *WMQ* 37 (1980): 243. Leadership is an area in which Rhode Island retained a broad similarity with its neighbouring colonies. David Fischer concludes that "age, estate and reputation...defined a ranking system that persisted for many generations" in Massachusetts. See Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 180. Stephen Foster also notes the standards of financial and social respectability required of political leadership in *Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England*, (1971), 69-70.

By the time of his missions to England, Williams was able to stand a little above the suspicious localism of the Rhode Island towns, acting more as a spiritual leader and a source of sound advice in times of trouble between the towns or with external forces. A good example of this is a letter written to the town of Providence in 1651, in which Williams made a number of suggestions as to the action to be taken by the town in settling the affairs of the deceased and protecting the interests of orphans and widows.<sup>1</sup> Williams also sought to defuse tensions between the Gortonists and their neighbours, despite his own clear aversion to Gorton's activities.

It was this slight detachment from the various town governments that made Williams a useful agent. He undertook his first mission in 1643 largely on his own initiative, and was certainly never formally commissioned by any of the Narragansett settlements. The welcoming reception accorded to him upon his return with the 1644 patent indicates that he had the support of a good number of the colonists, however, and the mainland towns subsequently made repeated requests that he serve as an agent again the later 1640s.

The other Narragansett agents were dispatched by individual communities, in circumstances of serious crisis. In 1645, the Shawomet settlers saw Samuel Gorton's agency as their last hope of regaining their township, and six years later John Clarke was dispatched by the Aquidneck towns in the wake of unrest caused by William Coddington. Again, both cases demonstrate that problems in the Narragansett towns were on a different scale from those experienced by Massachusetts. Gorton and his followers had to weigh up the relative value of individuals serving in England or America against a background of violence and enforced exile. With the Shawomet settlers scattered and living in various parts

<sup>1</sup> See Williams to Providence, 22 January 1651, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 328-331.

of the region among sympathetic English settlers and Indians alike, the community decided that not only Gorton, but also two of its other leading men should appeal on their behalf to England. John Greene and Randall Holden accompanied Gorton. Holden had penned some of Shawomet's most defiant letters to the Bay Colony while Greene kept the settlers together after most of the other notable figures were arrested and taken to Boston in 1643. That three of their most important figures should be allowed to go to England is a measure of the Gortonists' desperation, and their conviction that all avenues of redress in New England had been exhausted.

The Aquidneck towns faced a slightly less serious crisis when they sent John Clarke to London in 1651, and in this case the most powerful of the towns' leaders stayed in America. Clarke combined his Baptist preaching with political office, and had been Colony Treasurer under the abortive unification of the Narragansett towns in 1647. However, the united colony which had appointed Clarke to the Treasurer's post effectively ceased to exist when William Coddington tried to enforce his newly acquired Governorship on Aquidneck. The island towns each had an elected leadership at the time, but neither town proposed sending any of its councillors to England. An assembly of Newport settlers took the lead in ordering its six-man council to remain in office, while choosing a seventh man (Clarke) to serve as agent.<sup>1</sup>

The pattern of choosing agents who were not quite at the top of the colonial hierarchy does not apply in Connecticut, but even here the general rule that an agent should be more valuable to the colony in London than in America holds true. Having elected the younger John Winthrop governor for the first time in 1657,

<sup>1</sup> The Newport order is printed in Isaac Backus, *History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians called Baptists*, (1777), vol I: 274.

Connecticut changed its laws in 1659 to enable it to keep re-electing him annually thereafter.<sup>1</sup> Winthrop led the colony's most successful expansionist manoeuvres in the early 1660s, when New Haven was annexed and large parts of Long Island and Rhode Island coveted also. Winthrop's own involvement in these plans, combined with a persistent homesickness for England, made him insist that he represent the colony personally in 1661.<sup>2</sup>

In Winthrop's case the potential benefit of the mission clearly outweighed the damage likely from the temporary loss of a leading figure, although the reasons were rather the reverse of those discussed in Rhode Island's case. Connecticut in the early 1660s was a confident community largely free from internal or external threats, and did not require the sort of daily crisis-management which seemed so common elsewhere. While the top leadership in Massachusetts and the Rhode Island towns nervously contemplated the implications of a new English regime and continuing internal tensions, Connecticut's governor was free to move onto the offensive in London.

Although the circumstances surrounding all of the above missions are rather different, at the particular time when the mission became necessary the agents were all less important to their communities as leaders than they were as agents. This was not necessarily the case before, or after, the mission in question, but was certainly true at the crucial moment.

Important as political figures were, the New England colonies frequently turned to their ecclesiastical elite as an alternative source of trustworthy agents who carried authority in England and America alike. The high proportion of ministers chosen as agents reflects the

1 Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 190.

2 For Winthrop's personal motives for taking the agency, see Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, 117.



important role of the churches and the clergy in transatlantic affairs. Three of the Bay Colony's seven agents were ordained ministers: Thomas Weld, minister at Roxbury, and Hugh Peter of the church at Salem were the Bay's first agents in 1641, and John Norton undertook the 1661 mission as minister in Boston. Rhode Island's Roger Williams, Samuel Gorton and John Clarke all had religious credentials which had a bearing on their missions, even if their social position was a little different from the Bay ministers.

Appointing ministers as agents had wide implications on both sides of the ocean. Early colonial religious leaders, and the Massachusetts clergy in particular, usually commanded respect well beyond the bounds of their own congregations, and this could open doors for agents in England. However, some colonists worried that such employment dangerously blurred the line between matters civil and spiritual, and there was an ever-present danger that agents left to their own devices would become involved in activities which, in the colonies, would have been reserved for the civil authorities. Serving as agents allowed the clergy to maintain a high profile as part of the Bay Colony's image, stressing the religious nature of New England colonisation and presenting a picture of close cooperation between church and state. However, critics in England naturally assumed that the agents were typical of the colonial clergy and therefore wholly representative of New England church policy.

Using ministers as agents did touch upon some fundamental aspects of colonial society. Massachusetts was founded with specific rules about what later generations would call the separation of church and state, and however much influence ministers may have had on the secular leadership, the clergy could not themselves hold political office. The Bay churches were powerful, but not in all areas of Massachusetts society. The clergy were regularly consulted about issues such as



Indian affairs and relations with England, as well as more obvious questions of public morals and conduct. Ministers often reacted strongly to any perceived threat to the established order of Massachusetts: in 1645 they argued against a relaxation of the laws regarding strangers, fearing that the colony would be over-run by the ungodly. In other areas more central to secular power, like land distribution and taxation, the civil authorities were less keen to allow clerical input.<sup>1</sup>

Over time, some of the advantages of sending ministers to England could be cancelled out by changing attitudes in the home country. In the early 1640s, New England ministers could command almost automatic respect from religious people in England: agents Weld and Peter were highly successful in the initial stages of their mission, especially in raising funds for colonial education.<sup>2</sup> As the decade progressed, the attitudes of Englishmen to their New England brethren became more ambivalent. Religious polarisation in the mid-1640s meant that a Massachusetts minister could have as many enemies as friends in England, simply because of the form of church organisation he represented.<sup>3</sup>

Charitable appeals for the education of Indians and the relief of the poor were an area in which ministers could probably out-perform their secular colleagues, but such tasks also raised questions of propriety in the colonies. Most of the Massachusetts leadership accepted

1 For the influence of ministers on secular affairs, see David Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, (1972), 132. The 1645 controversy is described in Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, (1955), 106.

2 Weld and Peter attracted considerable financial contributions to the colony in the first year of their mission, having successfully petitioned Parliament for leave to hold a collection in some of the London parishes.

3 The impact of agents' religious activities in England is discussed more fully in Chapter 5 below.

that the clergy had a useful role to play in transatlantic questions, but there was less agreement on whether they should actually serve as agents, and in particular whether it was appropriate for them to handle financial matters. Salem leader John Endecott suggested as an alternative to the 1641 mission that well-known ministers like John Cotton should write to contacts in England to elicit support.<sup>1</sup>

Most church elders and ministers wanted a more prominent part than that, however. The Bay's internal troubles in the mid-1640s prompted the elders of the Bay churches to offer the General Court a lengthy and detailed series of opinions on the questions of the colony's relationship with England, and also the case of the Remonstrant faction.<sup>2</sup> Such consultation was an integral part of planning Edward Winslow's agency, which began shortly afterward. The Bay churches also wanted a role in agent selection. The attempt to send John Winthrop and John Norton to England in 1646 has already been mentioned, but it is significant that the proposal came initially from a church elder. In 1641, and again in 1661, the Massachusetts leadership considered it useful to have agents from both the civil and ecclesiastical spheres, and the suggestion that the Governor and a minister make up the agency team in 1646 was a further attempt to formalise this practice.<sup>3</sup>

The controversies associated with the selection of clerical agents are best revealed by the first Massachusetts mission, organised in 1641. The mission was portrayed by the colony leadership as an expedition to help those fighting for the cause of Reformation in

1 Endecott to John Winthrop, ca. February 1641, in *Winthrop Papers* IV: 315.

2 Winthrop *Journal*, II: 294-299.

3 The lower house of the Massachusetts assembly explicitly stated in December 1661 that two agents should be sent to England, one from "the civil state, the other of the ecclesiastical". See Mass Archives, 106: 44b.

England. John Winthrop argued as much, and agent Hugh Peter had no hesitation in lending his preaching skills to the Parliamentary Army. In such circumstances, sending a minister to England bears some logic, but this is not the full story. Peter himself was no cloistered cleric, and his contribution to the lives of his Salem congregation went far beyond affairs of the spirit. By the time Peter left Massachusetts in 1641, he had established fishing and shipbuilding enterprises, and owned more than a thousand acres of land. He also operated a mill and a glassworks. Equally important was the fact that Peter's financial dealings predated his arrival in Massachusetts. The minister, working under the protection of the Earl of Warwick, had travelled around England in the 1620s raising money for the upkeep of his fellow clergy.<sup>1</sup>

Little wonder, then, that Salem leader John Endecott was suspicious of the reasons offered by John Winthrop for the mission to England. Peter was an ideal choice if the real aim of the mission was the collection of money for the colony, under cover of religious reform. For a minister "to leave his work and to attend to secular business which may be done by others", argued Endecott, might be justifiably condemned as "something Jesuiticall."<sup>2</sup> In Endecott's view, Massachusetts was trying to use the spiritual prestige of ministers to achieve some very worldly goals. Endecott's doubts were not widely shared, however. Most colonial leaders expressed no apprehension about a possible corruption of the ministers' role, and saw clerical involvement in the transatlantic relationship as inevitable and beneficial. Only as the 1640s progressed did the Bay Colony realise

1 Ronald Pacy offers a detailed catalogue of Peter's financial interests and activities. See Pacy, "Spiritual Combat: The Life and Personality of Hugh Peters, a Puritan Minister." PhD thesis, State University of New York, Buffalo (1978), 76, 38.

2 Endecott to John Winthrop, ca. February 1641, *Winthrop Papers* IV:315.

that its ministers were being forced onto the defensive in England.

If the Bay Colony emphasised its religious tone by choosing ministers as agents, the Rhode Island towns were represented by men who had made careers out of opposition to the Massachusetts churches. The role of the three most prominent Rhode Island agents in the spiritual and political leadership of their communities has already been noted, but it is important to stress that they drew much of their strength as agents from their religious activities. Roger Williams, erstwhile minister of Salem, Massachusetts, took separatism from the English Church to dramatic extremes. He was a prolific author of theological tracts, most of which roundly condemned the Bay Colony for its form of church government. John Clarke was the founding preacher of the first Baptist congregation at Newport, Aquidneck, and was in direct confrontation with the authorities in Boston as a result of his preaching. Samuel Gorton was a radical sectarian who once gave his occupation as "Professor of Christ" and preached to his followers at Shawomet, as well as to congregations in London's Cheapside during his agency. All of Rhode Island's agents could claim to have been persecuted by Massachusetts because of their religious beliefs. This is not surprising, given that most of the original generation who settled around Narragansett Bay had some grievance with Bay Congregationalism. The significance of the agents' religious experiences is that they offered considerable ammunition for attacks on Massachusetts, and could sometimes force Bay agents- especially the ministers- onto the defensive.

Rhode Island's agents took every opportunity to publicise their religious experiences once they reached England, and in the case of John Clarke there is even a suggestion that trouble was provoked deliberately in order to cast the Massachusetts authorities once more as intolerant persecutors. Such a strategy was not uncommon



amongst New England dissenters, and Quakers in particular employed martyrdom as a tactic in the late 1650s. Clarke had arrived in New England in 1637, and although he was not involved in the Antinomian crisis, he joined the group which moved south to Aquidneck.<sup>1</sup> In 1644, Clarke founded the Baptist church in Newport, and his religion brought him into conflict with the Massachusetts authorities in July 1651. Clarke, along with two members of his congregation, visited an elderly man in Lynn, Massachusetts. The three were arrested, taken to Boston and fined for preaching: one of Clarke's companions was whipped.<sup>2</sup>

Clarke does seem to have gone to peculiar lengths to bring himself to the attention of the Massachusetts magistrates, and it is hardly surprising that at least one nineteenth-century Massachusetts writer argued that Clarke was acting as an *agent provocateur*.<sup>3</sup> Lynn was a settlement about ten miles north of Boston, some sixty miles on a direct line from Newport. Clarke was a long way from home and right in the heart of the Bay Colony. It is debatable, though, whether Clarke anticipated going to England later in 1651 when he embarked on his visit to Lynn. William Coddington caused serious splits in the colony when he refused the Presidency and went to England in 1648, but it was not until his return to

1 Clarke was held in high esteem from the beginning of the Aquidneck settlement, signing the document which established the civil government at Portsmouth early in 1639. *RI Rec I*: 52.

2 Accounts of Clarke's visit to Massachusetts are to be found in Gerald Sandler, "Doctors Afield: John Clarke (1609-1676)" *New England Journal of Medicine* (1963) 1027; William McLoughlin, *New England Dissent 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State*, (1971), vol 1, 19-20. Primary accounts are in Clarke's own *Illl Newes from New-England* (1652); the Massachusetts viewpoint was put by Thomas Cobbett, *The Civil Magistrates Power in Matters of Religion* (1653).

3 This suggestion, by John Palfrey, was refuted by Henry Melville King in a historiographical debate in the later 19th century. See King, *Early Baptists Defended*, (1880), 12.



Newport in August 1651 that the colonists formally decided to send agents. Clarke was not commissioned until October, some three months after he travelled to Massachusetts. In any case, for Clarke to deliberately provoke Massachusetts was a very risky tactic. At the very least he could have been imprisoned for some months, which in turn would have delayed any journey he was planning to England.

Even if Clarke's motives for going to Massachusetts in the summer of 1651 were innocent, there can be no doubt that his experiences in Lynn brought him to the fore as a possible candidate for the agency. This was not directly a denominational issue- being a Baptist in England was not likely to give Clarke any particular advantage- but virtually any victim of Bay Colony persecution could hope for sympathy from some of England's leaders. In addition, while almost all of the citizens of Aquidneck could claim to have been persecuted by Massachusetts, most would have to admit that their troubles dated to the later 1630s. The Antinomian crisis which had led to their exile, however traumatic, was hardly news compared to the story Clarke was able to tell when he was sent as agent.

Ministers could be very effective when appealing to the sympathies of English supporters, but their social position also made their selection problematic. After all, if political leaders could be considered indispensable, congregations were even less willing to see their minister leave for England. None of the Massachusetts clergy who served as agents was given permission to leave without some negotiation between the colonial authorities and individual congregations. While there were various reasons for selecting secular agents in 1646 and 1655, it is likely that fears of opposition from congregations played their part in influencing the authorities. The Massachusetts church establishment remained ambivalent about agency missions, having to balance their desire for involvement and influence

against the shortage of capable clergy in the colony.

Two other prominent groups within colonial society are represented to a much smaller degree in the ranks of agents. All the colonies had some military capability and organisation from the earliest days of settlement, and the leaders of anti-Indian campaigns were well respected. Merchants too were important to the colonies, and their numbers grew as the colonial economy became more settled. Both occupations attracted much amateur involvement, of course, but men who dabbled in trade or held honorary commissions with the colonial militia need not be counted. John Leveret was the only professional soldier to serve as an agent, while William Hibbins was the only merchant.

In both cases, their professional activities suited them for the mission in hand, but the circumstances of those missions also make it clear why colonies called upon these professions sparingly when selecting their agents. Only the first Massachusetts mission had a clear economic motive, and so it made sense to call upon William Hibbins. Importantly, though, Hibbins was a merchant of a particular type, in that he was also church member and a respected member of Boston's town government. Many of New England's more prominent merchants of the 1650s and later were further removed from such orthodoxy, and if the colonial leadership had wished to send a merchant in the early years of the Restoration their choices would have been more limited. It might be argued that later Massachusetts missions were constitutional in nature anyway and that a merchant would have been an inappropriate choice. Nonetheless, the merchant community in general was seen to stand ever more in opposition to the first generation leadership as time went on, which added to the reluctance of the Bay to make use of their transatlantic knowledge and

connections.<sup>1</sup>

John Leveret's mission was also unusual, and a range of factors contributed to his selection as agent. Leveret's experience of transatlantic affairs could hardly be matched, in that he had played a part in many of the English world's most dramatic events in the decade after 1645. He spent that year in England leading a cavalry troop in Parliament's army, returning to New England in 1646. The following year saw him back in England briefly, witnessing the continuing struggles of the Long Parliament and the increasing political influence of the New Model Army. Back in New England, his 1652 mission to negotiate with New Amsterdam convinced him that the Dutch colony was ripe for the taking, and he returned to England to get the support of the Council of State for an attack. Early in 1654, Leveret was back in Boston, leading a small but powerful English fleet and calling for volunteers to help him take New Netherland: his plans were thwarted by the Bay Colony's reluctance to become involved and by the ending of the first Anglo-Dutch war.

In 1655, Leveret's interests coincided with those of the Bay Colony and he travelled as agent to Cromwell's court. Appointing Leveret as agent demonstrates a sense of pragmatism on the part of the Bay Colony leadership. Leveret had recently been something of an embarrassment to Massachusetts when he seized a Dutch ship. Such actions were contrary to the colony's policy of maintaining trade with New Amsterdam despite the wider European conflict between England and the Dutch.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, Leveret's military credentials and his acquaintance with Oliver Cromwell encouraged Massachusetts to take advantage of his wish to cross the Atlantic in pursuit of money owed him by the English

1 See Bailyn, *New England Merchants*, 106-11.

2 Leveret was given a 'grave and serious admonition' over this case, less than six months before his appointment as agent. *Mass Rec* IV part 1: 229.

government. The Bay Colony had heard of Cromwell's plan to attack the West Indies, and believed that Leveret could convince the English authorities to buy naval supplies for that mission in New England.

Much of Leveret's contact with the authorities in the early years of his mission involved the wages he claimed for his mission against the French settlements north of Massachusetts in 1654.<sup>1</sup> Leveret only returned to Massachusetts at the Restoration, when he denied any authority to represent Massachusetts and requested a safe conduct pass to leave England. His papers, once granted, included provision for his wife, family and servants to travel also: clearly Leveret had been living in England on a semi-permanent basis until the return of the Stuarts threatened to make life dangerous for a close supporter of the late Lord Protector.<sup>2</sup> This record implies that Leveret was not much of an agent, but the fact remains that Cromwell did not take any action against the colony during the mission. In hoping to discourage such action, Massachusetts may well have been right to choose an agent who could easily become part of Cromwell's court.

Whatever the nature of their influence and authority then, all the first generation agents had an important part to play in colonial life before, during and after their missions. Clearly, though, this was true of any number of men. Having established that prospective agents were notable figures, the colonial authorities needed to look for other qualities before making choices.

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While leadership in general was a shared characteristic

1 In December 1656, Leveret petitioned for £4482 13s 11d which he claimed to have spent on army and navy business. PRO, CO1/13 f53.

2 PRO, CO1/16 no. 50.



of most agents, they also had other, more specific, qualities and experiences which appealed to their colonies. In particular, most agents had gained some experience of representing their communities before they were sent to England. The often tense relationships between colonies provided much opportunity for men to be sent on local diplomatic missions, while negotiations of a different sort were required between the settlers and the Indians. Clearly, the relative status of a colonist visiting a neighbouring settlement was rather different from an agent appearing before the English government, but New England's leaders recognised that men who could be trusted with their colony's interests in one situation could probably be relied on equally in the other.

Three agents- Williams, Winslow and Winthrop- travelled to England more than once in an official capacity, thus having direct experience of the task at hand during their later missions. Such return visits meant that contacts could be made and revived, and the agent also would have an exact knowledge of what business had been transacted during his last visit. In a period when governments had little knowledge of the geographical or political realities of New England, agents who could claim the authority of precedent were particularly useful. Having witnessed London's colonial administrators in action, an agent was not only familiar with procedures but also with the personalities involved. Although the political upheavals of the period caused considerable change in personnel and policies, returning agents were able to maintain valuable contacts through the 1640s and into the next decade.

Roger Williams went to England twice during the period. His successful acquisition of the 1644 patent of civil government for the Rhode Island towns helped to make him the first choice when the mainland part of the colony once again sought an agent in 1650. Williams was reluctant to undertake a second mission, but his fellow



settlers were adamant. The Rhode Island General Assembly did consider three other men as possible alternatives, but preferred instead to wait for the better part of a year until Williams agreed to the agency. The colony was clearly willing to wait for its first choice.<sup>1</sup> Part of the reason Williams was chosen was his close friendship with Sir Henry Vane, erstwhile governor of Massachusetts and leading figure in the Long Parliament. Vane emerged from the political upheavals of the late 1640s with a higher profile than ever, and his rise in influence was noted carefully by Rhode Island.<sup>2</sup>

Developments in England also had a beneficial effect for Massachusetts agent Edward Winslow, albeit for rather different reasons. Winslow undertook three separate missions on behalf of Plymouth colony between 1621 and 1634, and Massachusetts considered this work a great asset when offering him the agency in 1646. The English government Winslow had known in the 1620s and 1630s was of course dramatically altered by 1646. His experiences during the 1634 mission were traumatic: Winslow was jailed by Archbishop Laud for having conducted religious gatherings and marriages in Plymouth, where there was no Anglican clergy. By 1646, though, Massachusetts believed that such credentials would meet with approval among England's parliamentary leadership. Winslow was "well known to the commissioners, having suffered...diverse months imprisonment, by means of the last arch prelate, in the cause of New England."<sup>3</sup> Experience as an agent in England could be positive or negative, but changing circumstances opened the possibility that either could

1 *RI Rec I*: 231; Williams to John Winthrop, jr., 9 October 1650, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 323.

2 Two generations of the Vane family were prominent in Stuart politics, but Sir Henry Vane, sr. plays no part in this study. All references to 'Vane' indicate the younger Sir Henry. *RI Rec I*: 94, 125.

3 Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 295.

be turned to advantage next time round.

The younger John Winthrop's experience of representing colonial interests in England stemmed from a combination of accident and a happy coincidence of public and private concerns. He was only formally commissioned as an agent once, for his mission to seek a charter for Connecticut in 1661, but transatlantic activities going back almost three decades gave him a valuable introduction to the job. Winthrop was in England tidying up family business during the quo warranto proceedings of 1634, when the crown attempted to recall the Massachusetts Charter. He played no part in the affair, but learned much about the workings of the English government and the dangers which faced even formally chartered colonies. Winthrop returned to New England in 1635 in the employ of Lords Saye and Brooke, who gave their name to the Saybrook Company. His task was to determine the feasibility of establishing a settlement in southern Connecticut, but the longer term value of the episode was in the contacts he made with influential Englishmen.<sup>1</sup>

Winthrop's closest involvement with an agency prior to his own came when he accompanied the Massachusetts agents across the Atlantic in 1641. He was not initially part of the mission, and went to England chiefly to organise funding for the development of an iron-works in New England. However, when William Hibbins returned to Boston after only a year in England, the remaining agents urged Winthrop "with many pressing arguments" to help with their agitations. According to his own account, Winthrop spent a year helping with the Bay mission, although he also devoted much effort to the

<sup>1</sup> Winthrop's contact with Lord Saye continued until 1662, when Winthrop tried to enlist Saye's help in securing a Connecticut charter. For Saybrook, see Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 96; Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans*, 80-100; Kupperman, "Definitions of Liberty on the Eve of the Civil War: Lord Say and Sele, Lord Brooke, and the American Puritan Colonies." *Historical Journal* 32 (1989): 17-33.

iron-works project, and returned to the colonies as soon as he had raised the funds and recruited the men necessary for the latter endeavour. Such links, both official and personal, made Winthrop a valuable asset to Connecticut.<sup>1</sup>

Other agents served their colonies within New England, in a variety of circumstances. Some agents were Commissioners of the United Colonies. Simon Bradstreet, Edward Winslow and New Haven's ill-starred Thomas Gregson all held this office before their missions. Winslow and Gregson were founding signatories to the original establishment of the Confederation in 1643, while Bradstreet was the longest serving Commissioner of all.<sup>2</sup> John Leveret's introduction to serving the Bay Colony was more military in nature, and took him to various parts of New England prior to his agency in 1655. In 1642, Leveret presented an ultimatum to Narragansett leader Miantonomi on behalf of the Bay Colony. A decade later, Massachusetts sent Leveret to Manhattan. He was ordered to assess the attitudes and military situation of the Dutch and to decide whether the United Colonies would be justified in attempting to take New Netherland.<sup>3</sup>

1 Robert Black argues that Winthrop was a formally appointed agent during his first two visits to England, but the evidence is sparse. Massachusetts may even have disapproved of Winthrop's involvement in the 1640s, because it was reluctant to reimburse the bills he claimed to have incurred on the colony's behalf. See Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 78, 111; John Winthrop to Massachusetts General Court, ca.1647, in *Winthrop Papers* V: 123.

2 Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, 388.

3 *Mass Rec* II: 23; A brief account of the mission is in John Hull, "The Diaries of John Hull" *Archæologia Americana: Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* 3 (1857): 174. Leveret's partner on the 1652 assignment, William Davis, was never sent to England as an agent, but he was entrusted with supervising financial matters for the 1662 mission of Simon Bradstreet and John Norton. See Hutchinson Papers, II: 74-5.

Some missions within New England involved religious rather than political diplomacy. The Massachusetts churches often maintained contact with congregations which had originally settled in the Bay before moving to found new churches elsewhere. Elders and ministers alike visited such churches, and sometimes tried to help solve problems. John Norton spent a month in Hartford, Connecticut in 1657 in an attempt to reconcile rival groups in the congregation: he had some initial success, but the church fell into factionalism again later that year.<sup>1</sup> A slightly different kind of mission was undertaken by Boston elder William Hibbins, who represented his church on a mission to Aquidneck in 1640 to investigate the new congregation formed by the refugee Antinomians. Despite the exiles' refusal to accept the delegates, the Boston church could not agree on whether to break off contact with them.<sup>2</sup>

Such examples show that a significant number of agents had previously represented their colonies, but they do not mean that such experience automatically made an individual a likely candidate for a later agency. Colonies placed more emphasis on public standing and religious orthodoxy than they did on directly relevant experience. Perhaps the most pronounced example is that of William Hibbins, whose career following his mission has never attracted much attention. After returning to New England in 1642, Hibbins was never suggested as a candidate for any future agency, despite becoming a colony magistrate and working as a successful merchant until shortly before his death in 1654. There is no evidence of Hibbins refusing to participate in future missions, and no evidence either that the colony considered his work in 1641 to have been unsatisfactory.

1 See John Hull, *Diaries*, 180; Ellis, *History of the First Church of Boston*, 94.

2 Hibbins' brief account of his mission to Aquidneck is printed in Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, 390-1; see also Winthrop, *Journal*, I: 330-1.



Hibbins was formally thanked for his agency by the General Court in November 1646, at the same meeting that appointed Winslow agent.<sup>1</sup> Had agency experience been highly prized, then it would hardly have been outrageous for Hibbins to be nominated for the mission. However, Hibbins was clearly not in the same league as the men who were proposed for the 1646 mission, and could not match the authority commanded by such men as John Winthrop, John Norton and Edward Winslow. In dangerous times, colonies saw leadership as a more important qualification than agency experience.

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Given the community rivalry and conflict discussed in the last chapter, it should come as no surprise that one set of compromises in agent selection stemmed not from the agents as individuals but from the factional and sectional interests which they represented. These factors in agent selection owed more to colonial politics than to the qualities of individuals, although separating the settler from the settlement was not an easy thing in those communities which followed a particular spiritual path. Inhabitants of Shawomet, for example, were inevitably and rightly seen as followers of Samuel Gorton, with all the religious and political connotations which that implied. New England's tendency toward localism thus became a factor in the choice of agents as well as in wider concerns about missions as a whole. The Rhode Island towns again provide the most notable examples, but the Massachusetts authorities also had to balance local interests.

In the three most controversial missions dispatched by Massachusetts in this period- those of 1641, 1646 and 1661- no two agents or proposed agents for a given mission came from the same town. In

1 *Mass Rec* II: 185.



addition, the General Court was usually very careful not to antagonise local sentiment. Governor Thomas Dudley clearly anticipated resistance to the employment of Hugh Peter, and wrote to Peter's church at Salem along with "near all the rest of the magistrates and some of the elders", requesting that the pastor be released from service in the town. A similar approach was made to Roxbury, which "freely yielded" Thomas Weld, albeit after some debate. Such was the Court's unwillingness to pursue the issue in the face of the ensuing resistance from Salem, that the mission was only dispatched at the second attempt after prolonged negotiations.<sup>1</sup> In 1646, Edward Winslow's advantages as a candidate were further strengthened by the fact that he had played no part in any of the Bay Colony's internal disputes in the previous decade. Only in 1655, when Massachusetts was relatively secure from criticism at home and abroad, did no local interests emerge to challenge John Leveret's agency.

Local tensions continued to be a characteristic of the Rhode Island settlements throughout the 1640s and 1650s, and by the Restoration such interests had become an integral part of the colony government. Rhode Island's general assembly, made up of representatives of the four towns, considered sending a new agent to approach Charles II for a royal charter in 1660. John Clarke was still in England, but was not included in the initial list of candidates. Instead, a committee nominated seven men, all of whom had good agency qualifications. Roger Williams was of course an experienced agent and probably the only man respected in all parts of the colony. Samuel Gorton and Randall Holden still led the settlement at Shawomet; they were joined on the list by the son of their late colleague, John Greene. William Brenton was the sitting colony President, William Dyer had led the anti-Coddington

<sup>1</sup> Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 25-26.

agitation in Newport a decade before, and Benedict Arnold was the leading figure in the faction which occupied much of southern Providence.<sup>1</sup>

The most significant point about this list, though, is that it includes men from all the major groupings in what was still more of a confederation than a united colony. The Gortonists, the Arnolds and the Newport merchants had their representatives, and there were also two candidates- Williams and Brenton- who might be acceptable to all by virtue of their past and present office-holding. Even so, choosing one or two men from the list was an awkward proposition, and the court ultimately decided to abandon the idea. It took the easiest alternative, and extended the 1651 commission held by John Clarke in the name of the island towns to include the seal of the whole colony. Clarke had played no part in the internal politics of the Narragansett Bay area for a decade, and this, along with his experience as an agent, persuaded the Rhode Islanders that he offered the best compromise solution to their problems.

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The final section of this chapter must consider the questions posed by agents who clearly had personal interests which spanned the Atlantic, and who took the opportunity to further these during their missions. Perhaps all would have returned to England on their own in any case, but this is by no means certain. In most instances, agents were simply opportunistic, in that they took the chance offered by their missions to take part in some English activity, usually religious, political or economic, which interested them. Other agents gave little hint while in America that they might wish to participate in English affairs again, but then stayed in England far longer than their missions

<sup>1</sup> The proceedings of the assembly are in *RI Rec I*: 441-442.

required.

Some of the manifestations of agents' English interests will be examined in Chapter 5, where their contributions are placed in the wider context of transatlantic society. For the moment, it is important to assess the implications of agents' wider concerns for the selection process. If many agents wished to go to England enough to volunteer or at least respond enthusiastically to a call to service, colonies could anticipate little problem in finding a willing agent once a mission had been decided upon. In the long run, though, agents were more likely to become distracted by their private interests in England. There is no evidence of a colony rejecting a candidate on the grounds that he had too many English interests. Indeed the contrary is true: agents with a wide knowledge of, and involvement in, English affairs were favoured by colonies, on the grounds that they would use their experiences to the profit of the colony. Only if an agent failed in the long term to balance his personal and colonial commitments would relations become tense.

The notably high number of agents that never returned to the colonies suggests that England offered much that was attractive to members of the first colonial generation. Three of the Bay Colony's first four agents- Peter, Weld and Winslow- stayed in England permanently. Others, like Rhode Island agents Samuel Gorton, Roger Williams and John Clarke showed no hurry to return to America after their missions were completed, and the same is true for the Bay's John Leveret. If they were so determined to stay in England, however, surely men like Edward Winslow would have abandoned the colonies long before they did, without waiting to be sent on a mission. Students of migration use the concept of 'push' and 'pull' factors to explain why individuals leave one place to go to another, and such a framework can continue to apply to people after they reach their destination. Unforeseen hazards may

encourage thoughts of a return voyage, as might favourable changes in the situation at home. Agents, like many other colonists, had a range of reasons why they might wish to leave New England either temporarily or permanently, and individual examples help to illustrate the ambivalence of even the most influential of colonists about their new home.

First, the Reverend Hugh Peter. Peter's career contains a number of examples of restlessness and lack of concentration on his immediate task. Peter came to New England originally in 1635 as an agent of the Saybrook patentees, along with Sir Henry Vane, jr. and the younger John Winthrop. He was quickly distracted, however, and was soon devoting much of his efforts to proposing solutions to the economic difficulties of Massachusetts. To be fair, neither of his colleagues did much to further the Saybrook project either, and Peter may only have accepted the post because he was about to be expelled from Rotterdam and hoped to secure a ministry somewhere in New England.<sup>1</sup> Before the decade was out, however, Peter was thinking of moving again. He tried to encourage economic cooperation with the Dutch in New Netherland and also with the Caribbean colonies, and his fellow-settlers believed he was actually planning to emigrate to the latter.<sup>2</sup>

Other factors indicate that the Salem minister was unhappy with his circumstances on the eve of his mission to England. Peter's domestic life attracted some controversy. His first wife was accused of not having secured the approval of her old congregation in Rotterdam for her removal to America- a serious charge

1 See Raymond Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan*, (1954), 95.

2 Peter suggested that cotton from the West Indies could be imported to offer winter employment in weaving for the Massachusetts colonists. A few months before the 1641 mission, John Endecott was convinced that Peter was going to move south. Peter to Winthrop, [1638], 4th *MHS Proceedings* 7: 200-201; Endecott to Winthrop, ca. February 1641, in *Winthrop Papers*, IV: 315.



when made against a minister's wife. Peter's second marriage was even more controversial: two women claimed to have received a proposal from him and the minister himself came out of the affair considerably embarrassed. On another level, Peter was unpopular with some of the more separatist members of the Salem congregation, who remembered with affection their erstwhile minister Roger Williams. Such people had no sympathy for the new preacher's failure to come to a firm decision over his attitude to the Church of England.<sup>1</sup>

Peter probably saw the 1641 mission as the solution to a generally deteriorating situation. He openly considered going to England as early as 1639, and his letters to John Winthrop in this period indicate that he was trying desperately to find a way of extricating himself from the looming scandal of his personal affairs. Hindsight should not be allowed to impose any inevitability on this process, and a return to England may have been just one of many straws to be clutched. Still, the way in which Peter expressed the idea is unusual, and suggests that the agency was indeed the fulfilment of an older hope. In 1639, Peter wrote of postponing his marriage "'til we hear what England does, supposing I may be called to some employment that will not suit a married estate."<sup>2</sup> There is not enough evidence here to prove that Hugh Peter undertook the 1641 mission to get away from his wife. When the opportunity arose, however, he accepted the mission to England with no hesitation, and it is clear that the idea of a return to England coloured Peter's outlook throughout the final

1 Peter's biographers disagree about the Salem years. Stearns paints an optimistic picture, arguing that apart from the separatist challenge and the personal difficulties, the Salem ministry 'went smoothly'. Such qualifications are rather serious, though, and Pacy argues in his biography that the string of controversies which marked Peter's ministry may have made him glad to leave in 1641. Stearns, *Strenuous Puritan*, 127-137; Pacy, "Spiritual Combat", 87.

2 Quoted in Stearns, *Strenuous Puritan*, 136.



years of strains and stresses in his Salem ministry.

Peter's restlessness and ambivalence about New England did not become clearer as time went on. His English career was a broadly ranging mixture of army chaplaincy in England and Ireland, fund-raising for the Parliamentary cause in Holland, and agitation for the execution of Charles I and a further reformation of church and state. Yet he had a fond regard for individuals in New England and repeatedly claimed to be planning a return to the colonies. Peter even welcomed William Coddington to London in 1650, despite having been one of the leading voices in the persecution of the Hutchinson faction of which Coddington was a leading member, and seems to have wanted to maintain all possible contact with New England.<sup>1</sup> Peter could have lived on either side of the ocean, and he never seems to have decided whether he made the right choice.

Peter's fellow agent Thomas Weld also remained in England permanently, although in his case a more specific cause may be identified. Weld had no reason to leave Massachusetts of the sort experienced by his colleague, but once in England the scandal over the misappropriation of agency funds discouraged him from returning to New England. Massachusetts tried to blame Weld for the fact that funds raised for the education of Indians went missing once they reached the colony. The agent was fully vindicated by the English authorities but could not easily forgive the colony's attempt to make him a scapegoat. Significantly, however, Weld went on to apply something of his American experience to his later career in England, when he adopted strict Massachusetts-style tests for piety in his Gateshead congregation. Weld's confidence in the Bay government may have been shaken by his agency, but his faith in the

<sup>1</sup> Coddington recorded that his encounter with Peter was very amicable, despite a rather tactless attempt at humour when he called Peter 'Archbishop of Canterbury'. See Coddington to John Winthrop, jr., 19 February 1652 in *MHS Collections*, 4th series 7 : 281.

colony's church practices never wavered.<sup>1</sup>

Weld's successor in the Massachusetts agency, Edward Winslow, offers an even more complex case. Winslow had no clear reason for wanting to undertake his mission, had little involvement in the conflicts which led to it, and yet emerged as the most diligent of all the Bay Colony's agents. His decision to undertake the 1646 mission was hailed half a century later as the action of an American Hercules. According to Cotton Mather, when the settlers were faced with the Gortonists, Winslow "having been from his very early days accustomed to the crossing of that sort of serpent, generously undertook another agency."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Winslow's acceptance of the mission owes more to it being unexceptional to him rather than a dramatic new undertaking. The struggle with the Gortonists was just the latest problem facing the colonial leadership in America, and Winslow's career centred on such matters. Winslow kept in close contact with events in England throughout his years in Plymouth. In 1640, he informed John Winthrop of the death of Lord Keeper Coventry and the dismissal of Secretary of State Sir John Coke. The colonists, believed Winslow, had lost

1 The controversy over the funds raised by Weld and Peter is described in Raymond Stearns, "The Weld-Peter Mission to England." *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 32 (1937): 188-247. Weld's later career, in which he condemned Baptists and Quakers as roundly as did the most vocal of his Massachusetts brethren is discussed in Roger Howell, "Thomas Weld of Gateshead: The Return of a New England Puritan." *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4 ser 48 (1970): 303-331.

2 Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, (1702) (repr. 1972), II: 209. Mather's work was designed to give examples of model Puritan lives to remind his contemporaries of how far they had fallen since the time of the first generation, and has to be treated with caution. Peter Gay analyses Mather's work and the motives behind it in *A Loss of Mastery: Puritan Historians in Colonial America*, (1966), 53-87.

their best friends at Court.<sup>1</sup> He was just as well informed of matters closer to home, and gave Governor Winthrop a lengthy report about tensions with Dutch New Netherland in 1644.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising therefore that Winslow should be vocal on the subject of the Gortonists, but his impassioned lobbying for a mission in 1646 makes it hard to escape the conclusion that he did everything to assist his selection short of openly demanding the job. Quite why Winslow was so adamant about this issue is unclear. He doubtless disliked and feared the activities of Gorton, but so did many people who had a far more immediate interest than a fifty-year-old settler from Plymouth who had last crossed the Atlantic a dozen years earlier. Furthermore, unlike Hugh Peter, Winslow had no clear reason for wanting to leave New England. The records of Plymouth Colony describe a man who had the full confidence of his fellow settlers and was regularly appointed to high office; indeed, Plymouth continued to elect Winslow to a colony assistantship during his years in England. Nowhere is there any hint that Winslow left Plymouth under a cloud.

The enthusiasm with which Winslow conducted his pamphlet campaign against the Gortonists and the Remonstrants suggests that he considered himself to be in his element, while his decision to accept a variety of official duties from the Commonwealth government confirms that Winslow found much that appealed to him in mid-century England. Winslow was one of the most conscientious members of the Committee for Compounding in the early 1650s, and later accepted a commission with

1 The winter of 1639-40 saw a number of changes in the government of Charles I, as he prepared for war with the Scots. See C.V. Wedgwood, *The King's Peace*, (1974), 307-12.

2 See Winslow to Winthrop, 6 April 1644, in *Winthrop Papers* IV: 450-455.

Cromwell's West Indies mission.<sup>1</sup> Winslow saw himself as part of an English world which spanned the Atlantic and was equally at home in any part of it; his agency in 1646 was just another aspect of this outlook.

Winslow either did not intend to return permanently to England, or preferred not to make his feeling public. Plymouth colony, of course, missed Winslow's presence in government, and president William Bradford appears to have believed that the agent would only be away for a short time. By 1650, Bradford was complaining that Winslow had been

detained longer than was expected; and afterwards fell into other employments there, so he has now been absent this four years, which has been much to the weakening of this government, without whose consent he took these employments upon him.<sup>2</sup>

Many first generation agents found it hard to break their renewed ties with England when their missions were complete, however much time, effort and money they had invested in New England. Rhode Island's John Clarke stayed in England for twelve years, but was only active as an agent from 1651-53, and again in 1661-63. The intervening years were spent in obscurity in England, to the extent that the colony had lost contact with Clarke by the time of the Restoration. Despite being a major land-owner in Newport and leader of a growing Baptist congregation, Clarke found life in Cromwellian England preferable to returning to Rhode Island: only with the fresh upheaval of the Restoration did Clarke revive his agency work and return to the colony with a new charter.

Other Rhode Islanders were in no hurry to return to the colonies. Samuel Gorton remained in London until 1648, almost a year after he had secured a final

1 Winslow's name appears constantly in the attendance lists of Compounding Committee minutes for 1650/51, which are in PRO, SP23/8, 9, 10.

2 Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, 405.



judgement in his favour from the Parliamentary Commissioners. Likewise Roger Williams stayed in England for almost two years after gaining the overthrow of William Coddington's governorship of Aquidneck. Both men could claim to be waiting to make sure their successes were not reversed by the arrival of yet another agent from Massachusetts or the Coddington faction, but the timing is also revealing. Williams and Gorton were never idle when in England; the former wrote a series of theological tracts while the latter preached and agitated as a radical sectarian. With the looming prospect of further conflict in England in 1648, Gorton decided to return to America, and Williams made the same decision after Cromwell abolished the Rump Parliament in 1653.<sup>1</sup>

Agents like these were quite at home on either side of the Atlantic. They had a contribution to make both to the establishment of new model societies in America, and also to the reformation of life in England. Just where their priorities lay is hard to tell, except to the extent that their priorities shifted with events in England. In 1652, Roger Williams must have considered his writings to be more important than his contribution to the governance of Rhode Island- by the following year this was no longer true. John Clarke was active in the Baptist movement in England in the later 1650s, but returned to Newport after the restoration of the monarch and the Anglican church. Agents were, throughout this period, intimately concerned with events in England and in the colonies, and their missions were part of their transatlantic outlook.

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1 Phillip Gura argues that Gorton foresaw the collapse of the Leveller movement and decided to leave England, although his colonial concerns were probably just as important. See Gura, "The Radical Ideology of Samuel Gorton" *WMQ* (1979): 98.



The compromise and accommodation which marked the selection of agents meant that colonies were, in the main, well served by willing representatives who had a good knowledge of the workings of Atlantic government. There were also some contradictions, however, which could lead to tensions between colonies and agents in the longer term. The qualities which make a good leader and those which make someone a good representative are not necessarily the same, of course. It was inconceivable to the colonial authorities that negotiations with England would be conducted by anyone outside the established pool of trusted, orthodox leaders, but the experience and high profile of such agents also made them unwilling to be subservient to the demands of colonial leaders in the face of unexpected problems or conflicting loyalties.

## Differing Priorities: The Agents and Their Colonies

Some of the most profound problems faced by agents stemmed from their continuing relationships with the colonies they represented. So much so that by the end of the seventeenth century, tensions between agents and colonies had become the most clearly identifiable characteristic of the agency as an institution. In one of the first recorded generalisations about the history and nature of the agency, Cotton Mather noted that of all the agents of the seventeenth century, he did not know one "who did not at his return, meet with some very forward entertainment among his countrymen." Mather illustrated his conclusion with the story of John Norton, who was accused by his fellow colonists of having "laid the foundation of ruin to all our liberties."<sup>1</sup>

Norton's troubles, of which more later, came at the beginning of the 1660s, but almost all the first generation agents experienced some tension in their dealings with the colonial leadership. Much of this was the result of uncertainty and insecurity on the part of the colonies. Colonial leaders had to give agents certain powers and authority in order that a mission might be carried out at transatlantic distances. On the other hand, the leadership insisted on exercising some control over agents because they feared a loss of power and authority to the English government if agents made rash concessions. Differing degrees of licence were therefore granted depending on the individual concerned and the circumstances surrounding the mission. Unfortunately,

<sup>1</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, (1702; repr. 1972), III: 38.

several agents reached a different interpretation of their powers from that favoured by their colonial masters. If such differences in perception became marked, the colonial leadership could come to believe that their agent had, in a sense, gone native, thus adding to the scope for misunderstandings.

Agents often felt aggrieved by their treatment at the hands of their colonies, and never more so than in the organisation of practical, logistical issues. Many such problems must be characterised as teething troubles, in that the agency as an institution was still very much in its formative stages, but agents could rightly argue that the authorities were slow to learn lessons. Agents expected and deserved good communications with their colonies, reliable mechanisms for funding missions, and speedy settlement of outstanding bills at the end of a mission: often, none of these was forthcoming. Those agents who returned to the colonies were generally well-regarded politically, and attained high office, but disputes over mission finance often continued for years afterward.

In large part, agents suffered because they did not share the priorities of the colonial leadership. Colonies were anxious to send agents when trouble arose and devoted sufficient effort to the organisation of such emergency action. They became steadily less eager to support agents as missions progressed and any imminent danger had passed. More often than not, contact would become intermittent, financial support would cease to have high priority, and agents would find themselves almost forgotten. If the colonial leadership later disapproved of the results of a mission, their tendency to blame the agents concerned added further insult.

Colonies tried to overcome all these problems by increasing the sophistication of their bureaucratic measures. Using committees to gather finances, provide agents with documentary evidence, and negotiate with creditors put agency organisation on a much less

haphazard footing. Such planning was intended to reduce the likelihood of scandals, disputes and uncertainty over an agent's role, and was undoubtedly designed more for the benefit of the colony than the agent. Nonetheless, it also reflects a wider formalisation of inter-colonial and transatlantic relations, as the agency became a more regular part of colonial administrative procedure.

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Colonial leaders had to delegate some of their authority to their agents if missions were to have any chance of success. That it was impractical for all of a colony's leadership to be involved in the minutiae of negotiations at transatlantic distances was, after all, a fundamental reason for sending agents in the first place. While this principle was well established, however, its practical application was more problematic. New England's elite was never willing to give up any of its powers, and the degree of discretion allowed to an agent was one of the key points of uncertainty and contention in the formative decades of the agency. Problems differed from colony to colony, but the general pattern in the first generation was one of increasing constraint on agents, following disagreements in the colonies over the results of earlier, relatively autonomous missions. While disapproving members of colonial governments could often do little about compromises and agreements reached in London, they could try to restrict the powers of later agents.

Much of the evidence for the doubts and concerns felt by colonial leaders when passing some of their own authority to agents is found in agents' commissions. Several agents received formal commissions from their colonies, with written statements of responsibilities and powers. Such documents, especially when compared with contemporary correspondence, reveal that missions were organised with differing degrees of discussion, and with



varying levels of agreement within the colony over how much independence an agent was to be granted. There is considerable variation in the form of agents' orders, reflecting the fact that the institution of the agency was being developed from scratch. In many cases only the vaguest generalities were offered, and perhaps not even in writing, while in others a list of clear objectives was issued to the agent concerned.

The Rhode Island towns generally dispatched agents in circumstances of some urgency against a background of political crisis. Such conditions led to the hurried commissioning of agents, who might receive only the most superficial of orders. The situation in the Narragansett region usually made it all too obvious why an agent was going to England, and no formal commissions survive from the first two missions by Roger Williams and the Gortonists. This is not to say that such documents never existed, of course, but the agents were all more or less self-selected, and had sufficient authority in their own communities to embark on their missions. In both cases there was little or no organised government in the Narragansett region at the time, and the early missions were the result of settlers selecting one of their number to go to England, rather than a colonial authority choosing a representative.

Matters were a little more formal by the following decade. In 1651, when the Aquidneck communities were faced with violent clashes between supporters and opponents of William Coddington, almost all the inhabitants of the two towns gathered to sign a commission for John Clarke, ordering him in general terms "to do his utmost endeavours in soliciting our cause in England". When Clarke was recommissioned a decade later, though, the four main Rhode Island communities had managed to form a working union, and the agent was sent a more formal document which placed his status on a firmer basis. The new commission stressed Roger Williams' 1644 patent as the basis of the colony's legitimacy, and



ordered Clarke specifically to defend the rights and privileges contained therein. Clarke was to be the colony's "undoubted agent and attorney, to all intents and purposes", but his brief was strictly limited to the defence and preservation of the patent. The commission states explicitly that no alteration to the patent terms will be permitted by "any person or persons": it is implicit that no changes to the patent were to be made on the agent's initiative either.<sup>1</sup>

Clarke's second commission highlights another point about such documents, in that it was aimed as much at the English authorities as it was designed to give instructions to the agent. Colonies knew that agents would be asked to give evidence of their authority when they petitioned English committees, and lost no opportunity to include their message to England with varying levels of subtlety. The main point Rhode Island was making in Clarke's commission was that the Narragansett towns were united as a responsible political entity which "maintained government and order...by administering judgement and justice" according to the patent and in the name of Charles II.

Massachusetts, with its royal charter, believed that it had less to prove than Rhode Island in terms of colonial legitimacy, and was rarely so blatant in using agents' commissions as propaganda. Nonetheless, the Bay Colony kept one eye on likely English concerns when drafting instructions and tried to anticipate in some detail the problems which might arise when agents reached London. Edward Winslow went to England armed with detailed orders regarding the stance he was to take if questioned on a range of issues.<sup>2</sup> Winslow's commission focused on the Gortonists, but went on to note that

1 Clarke's first commission is printed in Isaac Backus, *History of New England*, (1777), vol 1, 274; his second is in RI Rec I: 433-435.

2 The General Court's list of answers which Winslow was to give in London is in Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 309-315.

if any other complaints, in any kind, have been, or shall be, made against us before the said commissioners, or before the high court of parliament, you have hereby like power and commission to answer on our behalf according to your instructions.<sup>1</sup>

Although this clause makes Winslow's authority sound wide-ranging, Massachusetts was specifically worried about the threat from the Remonstrant faction whose members were planning an appeal to England. However, the Bay still hoped that the latter problem could be headed off by taking firm action against the dissidents. Imprisonments and large fines were employed in an attempt to stop the petitioners taking their case to England, or at least to give Winslow some time to spread his version of events before they arrived. Aware that the agent's instructions were likely to become public knowledge, the colony refrained from mentioning the Remonstrants by name in case the impression was given that Massachusetts was losing control on a number of fronts.

From Winslow's mission onward, most Massachusetts agents' instructions were restrictive rather than enabling. Agents could certainly respond to new situations, but only within the bounds of their more general instructions. In 1655, John Leveret was issued with a wide-ranging commission, allowing him to act in "all matters of concernment" to Massachusetts, but he was also given a separate list of specific instructions which reveal that his authority was not as great as might be supposed. The latter document shows that Leveret's job was primarily to persuade the English authorities not to listen to any new complaints until the Bay Colony could send an answer of its own. Leveret was to hold up proceedings until the colonial government had "knowledge thereof and opportunity to answer for ourselves." Massachusetts did anticipate one specific complaint from the heirs or supporters of Sir Alexander Rigby, owner of a patent for part of the territory which is now Maine.

1 Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 313.

Rigby's son Edward had taken control of the company's interests in 1652 and was expected to oppose any northward expansion by Massachusetts following the English navy's 1654 attack on French settlements in the region. Even in this eventuality, though, Leveret was just to "make the best answer" he could at the time and seek further orders.<sup>1</sup>

Leveret's role in England was clearly subservient to his employers, and he remained obedient to his orders. After the Restoration, Leveret refused to respond to criticism of Massachusetts, arguing that he had no instructions relevant to the new situation. Leveret repeatedly denied that he had any authority to act on his colony's behalf and deal with the new royal officials, but he was prepared to take some less formal actions. Without asking Massachusetts, Leveret made initial approaches to Viscount Saye and Sele and the Earl of Manchester, entreating them to support the Bay Colony in the uncertain times of the 1660s. Both men had been interested in colonising projects for nearly four decades, but had not always been on the best of terms with Massachusetts. Leveret's gamble paid off, however, and Boston revived contact with the peers shortly afterward. Unwilling to push his luck, Leveret did no more for the colony and returned to New England in 1662.<sup>2</sup>

Encouraged by the time which Leveret's stalling bought them, the Bay authorities tried to enforce a similar reticence on their next agents. Indeed, the instructions issued to Simon Bradstreet and John Norton reached new levels of constraint. On 24 January 1662, the

1 Leveret's commission is printed in Hazard, *State Papers*, I: 607; also in *Hutchinson Papers*, I: 305; his instructions are in Hazard, *State Papers*, I: 607-608. For Edward Rigby's actions, see Rigby to Henry Jocelyn et. al., 19 July 1652, in Kavenagh, *Foundations of Colonial America*, I: 268-269.

2 For these contacts, see Leveret to Governor Endecott, 13 September 1660, in Charles E. Leverett, *A Memoir, Biographical and Genealogical, of Sir John Leverett, Knt., Governor of Massachusetts 1673-9*, (1856), 66.

agents were issued with orders including the following clauses:

You shall not engage us by any act of yours to anything which may be prejudicial to our present standing, according to patent. You shall give us speedy and constant account of all your transactions and what else may be of concernment to us.<sup>1</sup>

These instructions reflect the intense disagreement over the mission within the ranks of the Massachusetts hierarchy, and are the manifestation of Governor Endecott's determination that the colony should not concede any part of its chartered sovereignty to the newly restored monarchy in England. Endecott and his supporters recognised that they could not stop a mission which had considerable backing in the colony, but they used the formal documents issued to the agents to make clear their intention to place the blame for any unwelcome attention from England firmly at the door of Bradstreet and Norton.

The restrictiveness of agents' commissions reflects the fact that most agents were sent to solve a particular problem and then return to the colonies. That agents were often forced to move outside the bounds of their commissions is not a measure of their failure, but rather an acknowledgement of the realities of transatlantic institutions. Massachusetts in particular failed to grasp this point, however, and believed that the key to successful missions was to restrict an agent's authority so much that any new issue had to be referred back across the Atlantic, however time-consuming that might be. The Rhode Island communities, on the other hand, could ill afford to be complacent, but they too were uneasy when agents acted without specific instructions even in the most extreme emergencies. The next section considers the consequences of such independent action.

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1 *Hutchinson Papers*, II: 76.



In many instances, therefore, colonies attempted to set limits on their agents' authority from the outset of each mission. For such a strategy to work, colonies would have needed a much closer knowledge of English affairs than they in fact possessed. Tensions between agents and colonies could easily emerge when agents, having assessed the situation in England, decided that their missions were unlikely to be successful unless some changes were made to the objectives envisaged by the colonial leadership. Clearly, such tactical decisions undermined the strategic authority of the colonial leadership.

With hindsight, it is clear that colonies were more often helped than harmed when an agent decided to act on his own initiative. Even at the time, agents operating on the front line in London had little doubt about this. It is also possible to see the matter from the viewpoint of the colonies, though, and while many of their fears seemed even then to be paranoid, they cannot be written off out of hand. Young communities which had built up their authority gradually in the eyes of their own settlers and their neighbours had no wish to see their achievement overturned by the rash actions of an agent acting without their knowledge on the other side of the ocean.

The best example of the divergence of opinion between colony and agent is the Clarke-Williams mission of 1651-53. The two agents, dispatched by different parts of the fragmented Rhode Island confederation, decided to pool resources once they reached England. The towns they represented were left unsure of what their agents were doing, and doubly suspicious of each other as a result. Worse still, the apparent usurpation of authority by the two agents seemed worryingly reminiscent of the recent attempt by William Coddington to seize control of Aquidneck against the wishes of the settlers. If Coddington could persuade the English authorities to grant him personal control over half the colony, it was



easy for the more paranoid settlers to picture similar behaviour by Williams and Clarke.

At the outset, Clarke's mission had seemed straightforward. He was commissioned in 1651 by Newport and Portsmouth and his orders were signed by almost all the male inhabitants of the towns: 41 men signed from Portsmouth and 65 from Newport. The eighteenth-century commentator Isaac Backus believed that the male population of Aquidneck was 105 at the time, and the next official record, from 1655, lists a total of 147. Extrapolation is inevitably inexact, but support for Clarke's mission must have been virtually unanimous. There is also no doubt about the nature of the mission, in that it was designed to overthrow William Coddington's Governorship.<sup>1</sup>

The source of most of the later trouble was Williams' mission, which was less well defined. From the very beginning, the agent and his fellow colonists held different opinions as to the exact purpose of the journey to England. Williams told John Winthrop, jr. in October 1651 that he was being sent by Providence and Shawomet to "endeavour the renewing of their liberties upon the occasion of Mr. Coddington's late grant." Williams wanted to overthrow Coddington's commission because it split the colony which he, Williams, had tried to unite on the basis of the 1644 patent.<sup>2</sup>

Providence and Shawomet, on the other hand, could agree neither on the aims of the mission nor on Williams' authority as agent. In July 1652, as if accepting the agents' decision to work in unison, Shawomet suggested that an agreement might be reached with Aquidneck to allow the agents to sue for a unifying patent.<sup>3</sup> Three months later, a meeting of Shawomet and Providence told

1 See RIHS, Backus Papers, II: 25; RI Rec I: 299-302.

2 Williams to Winthrop, 6 October 1651, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 351.

3 Shawomet to Providence, 29 July 1652, in *Providence Rec* XV: 56.

Williams that he could have himself declared governor of the colony under a restored patent if he thought this would facilitate the negotiations with the English government. This governorship, lasting for a year, might bring much-needed stability to the colony.<sup>1</sup>

This last suggestion rekindled the suspicions of some colonists. Shortly afterward, another gathering of mainland settlers condemned the initiative, arguing that the imposition of a governor- even one as well-respected as Williams- was a threat to the liberties of the colony.<sup>2</sup> Williams was then told that he had been sent to England "for the renewing of the grand charter unto us without any desire to evade or oppose Mr Coddington's Commission for governing" Aquidneck.<sup>3</sup> The 'grand charter' was the 1644 patent, but how the mainland towns intended to renew it without first having Coddington's grant revoked is unclear.

Such inconsistencies reinforced Williams' determination to return to first principles and restore the English authority contained in the 1644 patent, regardless of what his fellow colonists believed. He was convinced of the need for some symbol of unity to bring the factions together, and embarked on his mission with the clear aim of reviving a single government in Rhode Island. Such a strategy was entirely in character. Williams had acquired the 1644 patent without fully consulting the island towns as to whether they wanted unity with the mainland, and had urged that Shawomet be included in the 1647 unification despite that town's absence from the patent terms. Williams' activities in 1652 indicate that he was also willing to ignore the wishes of the mainland if it would help get a new unification document. All the Rhode Island towns came

1 General Assembly of Providence Plantations to Williams, 28 October 1652, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 372.

2 RI Rec I: 256.

3 Providence and Warwick to Williams, 22 March 1653, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 381.

round to the idea of unification as the 1650s progressed, but as will be seen, resentment over the activities of Williams and Clarke resurfaced later when fresh finances for Clarke's agency were being gathered in the 1660s.

Having strong-minded, independent agents could therefore have repercussions far beyond the immediate concerns of a mission. In general, agents who followed their own initiative posed much less of a danger than their colonies feared, and could be more successful than when they followed orders to the letter. In joining forces to represent all four Rhode Island towns, Williams and Clarke took the only sensible approach open to them, and the colony benefited in the long term. Equally, John Leveret's unauthorised contacts with individual English leaders helped pave the way for the mission which followed, and the tight constraints on Bradstreet and Norton served only to encourage suspicion in England about the Massachusetts leadership. Nonetheless, the balance between empowerment and restriction was never fully worked out by the first generation, in large part because early colonial leaders were never so confident of their own authority as to be comfortable when delegating part of it to an agent.

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Differences in opinion like those between Williams and his fellow colonists were not helped by the practical problems surrounding agency work. Agents often felt shabbily treated by their colonies in terms of the logistical and financial support offered during missions. Problems arose from the haphazard nature of agency organisation in the early years, and particularly the haste with which some missions were arranged. Colonial authorities often paid much attention to the details of each agency at the outset of a mission, but even then the priority was to see the mission dispatched rather than to ensure the well-being of the agent.

Practical problems arose in a number of ways. Most immediate was the initial passage to England. Colonies worked on the assumption that crossing the Atlantic was a routine process, and that once money had been provided to secure transit on a suitable ship, the agent could often be left to his own devices. Agents were often sent ill-equipped in dangerous sailing conditions, because their colonies had come to hasty decisions. Maintaining communication between agent and colony posed some difficulties as the mission progressed, but this often had more to do with inefficiency in the colonies than physical barriers to correspondence. Perhaps most serious was the tendency for financial matters to become difficult, with more than one agent complaining that his mission was compromised through lack of funds.

The first logistical task facing agents and their colonies was the organisation of a transatlantic passage. Generally, this had to be achieved within the constraints of commercial shipping, and the rapid dispatch of an agent depended on a convenient ship being available. Sailing patterns in the Atlantic were largely seasonal in the mid-seventeenth century, and indeed for a considerable time beyond. This model was dictated in part by a wish to avoid sailing in the North Atlantic during the winter, but it also stemmed from the trading commodities which were the staple business of merchant ships. Vessels seeking fish off Newfoundland, for example, would leave England in the first four months of the year, returning in the late summer. Those trading in New England agricultural produce would arrive in the colonies in spring laden with manufactured goods, then wait for the autumn harvest, thus completing one of many



different Atlantic trading circles.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, the dispatch of an agent could be delayed if the decision to send him was taken at a time when shipping was unavailable. The first Massachusetts mission is a good example. The agents left Boston in early August 1641, and it was almost two months before they reached England. Leaving as they did before the harvest, they could not secure a direct passage and had to go via Newfoundland. They suffered another delay of three weeks there before making an unpleasant but relatively short three week journey to Bristol in a fishing trader.<sup>2</sup>

As well as trying to predict the seasonal cycles of trading voyages, New Englanders expected to face severe sea and weather conditions if they travelled during the winter months. Early in 1647, Thomas Peter wrote to the elder Winthrop of his journey from Massachusetts to Spain: his ship sailed on 19 December and endured a "full month of sad storms, such as seldom any seamen met with", arriving in Spain bereft of its mainsail and having lost all contact with its convoy companions.<sup>3</sup> As has been mentioned, New Haven agent Thomas Gregson was killed when his ship foundered on the eastward voyage early in 1645. John Winthrop, jr. was explicit about the threat prior to his 1661 mission, when he wrote that planning for the voyage had been postponed because no one could sail in

1 Ian K. Steele examines the seasonal pattern of Atlantic shipping in the seventy years after 1675, arguing that while much variation from seasonal patterns exists, it is still true that most ships reached England in the summer/autumn and left in the spring. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740*, (1986), 9-10. The Newfoundland fishing fleets are examined in Gillian T. Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland 1577-1660*, (1969).

2 Accounts of the journey are offered by Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan*, 153; and Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 112. The three week journey from Newfoundland was about a week shorter than the average crossing time. See Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland*, 5.

3 Peter was the brother of Massachusetts agent Hugh Peter. See Peter to Winthrop, 17 February 1647, *Winthrop Papers* V: 129.



the winter.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of these reservations, a curiously high proportion of agents travelled in winter. Of nine separate eastward voyages made by agents between 1641 and 1662, six began between late November and mid-February. Massachusetts agreed on its second mission at a General Court meeting held in November 1646, and agent Edward Winslow sailed for England in mid-December. The colony was in some hurry to send an agent following the arrival of Gortonist Randall Holden in Boston in September, and no record survives of any apprehension about sailing at that time of year.<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts later sent John Leveret to England in December 1655 and dispatched Bradstreet and Norton as their next pair of agents in February 1662. Rhode Island's John Clarke and Roger Williams left the colony in November 1651. William Vassall, representing the Massachusetts Remonstrants, sailed early in 1647.<sup>3</sup> In four of these cases, communities were in some hurry to send an agent to England, but neither Leveret nor Gregson

1 Winthrop to Fitz-John Winthrop, 25 October 1660; in *MHS Proceedings*, 5th series 8: 72.

2 Did Holden deliberately delay his arrival in Boston until autumn in the hope that Massachusetts would not be able to send an agent until the following spring? There is no decisive evidence either way. Holden carried orders from England dated 15 May 1646, so should have been able to sail earlier; equally, the Gortonists were aware that any delay might allow Massachusetts to occupy Shawomet permanently. Winslow's letter to be carried to the English authorities was dated 10 December 1646, and Winthrop records that the agent left "about the middle of December." See Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 313-4, 334.

3 In his account of the mission Vassall noted that during the winter, "all passages from N. England are tempestuous." Vassall had to argue thus, however, in an effort to show that the severe storms which threatened his ship were normal and not a providential sign of displeasure at the Remonstrants' activities. See John Child, *New-Englands Jonas*, (1647), 115.

was under any particular pressure.<sup>1</sup>

Colonies clearly did not consider winter crossings of the Atlantic to be sufficiently hazardous to postpone the dispatch of agents, although they did find the perceived danger a useful excuse with which to hide disagreements over missions. In the midst of the furore over the initial choice of Hugh Peter as agent in February 1641, John Winthrop noted that the ship on which the agents would have travelled was soon to depart and that the mission was abandoned "for that season."<sup>2</sup> There is little doubt, however, that had the Salem church immediately acquiesced to Peter's selection and not spread dissent throughout the colony, the first Bay Colony mission would, like the others, have been dispatched in winter.

Colonial agents, therefore, were not curtailed by the largely seasonal nature of Atlantic shipping in this period. If a colony wanted to dispatch an agent to England, he would be sent by any available ship. The high proportion of winter sailings indicates that some ships were available at that time of year, and that any risk to agents and their documents was considered- at least by the colonies- to be acceptable.

If agents were able to overcome the perceived dangers of the North Atlantic in winter, the communications links between them and their colonies were still prone to numerous potential hazards on land and sea alike. Communication was of course a two-way process, and regular contact should have been desirable to agents and colonies alike. Colonies could maintain close control over the activities of their agents, while agents could insist on moral and financial support as well as guidance

1 Leveret's voyage is unusual in that he did not have to rely on commercial transport like the other agents. Instead, he sailed to England aboard a French frigate, captured during raids on New France. The fact that his mission was in that respect voluntary underlines even more strongly the lack of fear of winter sailings.

2 Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 26.

on dealing with new problems.

Much of the question of continuing contact between agents and colonies revolves around the routine efficiency of transatlantic traffic. A range of obstacles stood in the way of effective communication, potentially hampering missions. Correspondence could arrive in England or the colonies illegible because of water damage, or several weeks or months late because of diversions caused by a range of natural and man-made obstacles. When the younger John Winthrop was in Europe in 1642, some of his belongings were seized by pirates. Winthrop's return to New England took more than 14 weeks thanks to bureaucratic incompetence in England and unfortunate weather in the summer of 1643.<sup>1</sup> Even when they reached land, travellers and letters were not necessarily safe. In the harsh Massachusetts winter of 1641-2, a man carrying all the letters which had recently arrived on a ship from England had a narrow escape from drowning when he fell through the ice covering a river.<sup>2</sup>

A lengthy list of such incidents may be culled from the records, but their statistical significance should not be exaggerated. Much evidence points to regular transatlantic communication being possible in this period, especially if correspondents were willing to take some basic precautions.<sup>3</sup> In terms of its most obvious single indicator, crossing the Atlantic was actually quite safe: relatively few ships were sunk. One historian

1 Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 114; Petition of John Winthrop, jr., to Parliament, ca.1644, in *Winthrop Papers* IV: 424.

2 The elder Winthrop characteristically believed that the man's escape stemmed from God's desire to protect the precious correspondence rather than any goodness inherent in the traveller himself. Winthrop, *Journal* II: 55.

3 David Cressy examines the various obstacles faced by correspondents before concluding that determined letter writers usually managed to conduct their business successfully, albeit after considerable time and expense in some cases. See Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century*, (1987), chapter 9.

has concluded that only one of nearly two hundred ships transporting New England immigrants in the 1630s was lost at sea.<sup>1</sup> While the agents studied here cannot be used as a valid statistical sample, their experience is nonetheless important. The individuals concerned made a total of twenty-six separate Atlantic crossings between 1641 and 1663, and the unfortunate Thomas Gregson was the only one who experienced a ship-wreck.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, careful correspondents could take measures to improve the odds of their letters arriving. Duplicated letters were sent by different routes, or entrusted to friends and colleagues who happened to be travelling. The latter option was of course no defence against natural disasters, but it did help to ensure accurate and speedy delivery when humanly possible and was favoured by agents who wished to send official documents back to the colonies. Roger Williams sent the 1652 revocation of William Coddington's commission back to Rhode Island with Newport settler William Dyer; a decade later, John Winthrop entrusted Connecticut settler and merchant John Richards with the newly acquired Connecticut charter.<sup>3</sup>

John Winthrop's agency also demonstrates the extent to which transatlantic communication was possible. A

1 Cressy concedes that this figure does not apply to shipping in general, in part because the most dangerous aspect of the round trip was often the eastward approach to the English Channel. See Cressy, *Coming Over*, 148.

2 The figures given include journeys made by individuals before their missions (Leveret in 1645/6 and 1647/8, Winthrop in 1641/3), but in cases where more than one agent travelled on the same ship, only one 'crossing' is counted. For example, the first Massachusetts mission accounts for three crossings; Weld, Peter, Hibbins and Winthrop shared a common eastward journey in 1641, Hibbins and Winthrop returned separately and the others never left England again.

3 Williams' action, while helping to ensure the safe transport of the papers, unfortunately further fuelled the suspicions of the mainland communities that the island was being granted special status. See Providence and Warwick [Shawomet] to Williams, 22 March 1653, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 380-1. For Richards' work, see Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 229.



simple count of the surviving letters in Winthrop's papers dated during his mission (August 1661 to April 1663) gives a total of thirty-eight letters sent to the agent from New England: almost two per month. Not all, to be sure, directly concerned the mission, but the maintenance of family correspondence alongside business matters reinforces the point that regular communication was possible on a large scale in this period, provided correspondents had the requisite motivation and persistence.<sup>1</sup>

This last point is crucial: communications needed human effort as well as technical capabilities, and most agents fared less well than Winthrop. Rhode Island's two mainland towns, distracted by the political upheavals over William Coddington's actions, failed to answer any of the letters which were diligently sent to them by Roger Williams during the first year of his 1651 mission. One of Williams' supporters in the colony complained to its leaders that the agent had received no encouragement or support.<sup>2</sup> Later, Rhode Island occasionally ordered letters to be written to John Clarke during the 1650s, but contact was generally sporadic and often initiated by the agent, not the colony.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, there is little evidence of either Rhode Island or Massachusetts frequently sending letters to agents. Once the initial excitement of a mission had waned, colonials tended to forget about their

1 The figures come from a study of the chronologically arranged microfilm edition of the Winthrop Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, (1976).

2 John Throckmorton of Providence to Warwick [Shawomet], 28 July 1652, in RIHS, Rhode Island Historical Manuscripts, X: 133.

3 Clarke sent gunpowder to Rhode Island in 1656, and the colony asked the agent to find out more about England's attitude toward the Dutch in New Netherland that same year. Apart from a revival of interest in English affairs after the death of Oliver Cromwell, Rhode Island and Clarke largely lost touch during much of the decade. For letters, see RI Rec I: 328, 346, 414.



representatives across the Atlantic. In most cases the failure of the colonial authorities to provide long term support was due to a lack of resolve and commitment rather than insurmountable technical hurdles. In terms of their political duties, some agents actually preferred this independence, but they deeply resented the accompanying failure to provide more practical logistical support.

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However familiar with England the agents were, and however sympathetic their hosts, they could not effectively perform their duties in London without the financial means to support themselves and pay the bills of those who helped them. Not only did money become the single most serious cause of tension between agents and colonies, but the lack of supply to agents actually imperiled some missions. Colonies were slow to realise that agents who were forced to raise money by working or borrowing were almost certain to be less effective than agents who had secure finances and sufficient resources to entertain influential figures and circulate persuasive propaganda.

Agency funding, like transport and communications, had to operate within the confines of the Atlantic trade and commercial networks.<sup>1</sup> Colonial fiscal systems were at varying levels of development in this period, but all had difficulty raising money quickly. Broadly, colonies had three ways to raise agency funds, only one of which was applicable to the initial financing of shipping costs. Somehow, colonial authorities had to raise money from the settlers and pay a ship's master in cash or arrange for him to carry a cargo to England for sale. Other methods

1 The most comprehensive recent study of the Atlantic economy and the place of the American colonies in it is John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*, (1985).

of revenue raising were only viable in the longer term; credits could be negotiated with English merchants dealing in New England produce, or contributions toward the colonial enterprise could be solicited from England.

Colonial governments raised money from their settlers in a number of ways, but they faced some considerable difficulties in the process. Some problems were caused by the inherent inefficiencies of seventeenth-century financial arrangements. There was, for example, no single currency in early New England and colonists used a variety of exchange media in the conduct of their financial affairs. Many everyday transactions involved barter. Merchants accepted agricultural produce in exchange for manufactured goods, and then sold the farm goods to inhabitants of the growing urban areas of New England, or exported them.<sup>1</sup>

The use of barter offered several advantages in comparison with the rudimentary currency systems of the seventeenth century. In the first place, formal coinage was scarce in the early decades of New England settlement. Despite the liquidation of significant assets by the emigrating English, most sterling currency remained in England to pay for transport or as credit for future orders with English merchants. The English currency which did reach New England generally made the return journey shortly afterward to pay for the importation of manufactured goods, which were scarce in the colonies. Alternative forms of hard currency included some Spanish and Portuguese coins, which reached New England from the Caribbean, and the Bay Colony minted

1 Newport merchant Peleg Sanford accepted pork, beef and dairy products in exchange for English hardware and haberdashery: he then shipped the agricultural goods for sale in the Caribbean. See Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, (1938), 40; an example of a similar operation in Salem, Massachusetts is in Essex Institute, Curwin Account Book I, f65.

coins of its own from 1652.<sup>1</sup> Much of this coinage suffered from the activities of fraudsters, who clipped metal from the edges of coins or manufactured counterfeit versions. In such circumstances, merchants and others were often unwilling to accept coinage at face value even when it was available, and barter provided a safer alternative. When Roger Williams was offered payment for his first mission, he specifically asked to be given a herd of goats in lieu of any currency remuneration.<sup>2</sup>

A rather more formalised version of the barter system was the development of fixed-price commodities, the values of which were regulated by the colonial authorities. Here, instead of haggling over the relative values of goods for barter, colonials could settle debts and pay taxes using officially registered items; Indian wampum was legal tender in Massachusetts from 1643-1661, and the value of corn was set in several colonies to enable its use as an exchange medium.<sup>3</sup> Southern and Caribbean colonies adopted similar policies toward their leading commodities, tobacco and sugar. Analogous to the problem of debased coinage, there was of course the question of how to assess the quality of the commodity being used in any given transaction. Such difficulties were particularly common in the official manifestations of this mode of exchange, with colonial officials being offered low quality goods as payment of taxes.<sup>4</sup>

When colonies attempted to gather taxes, they had to allow for the variety of exchange media. Sometimes, different rates were set for those paying in different

1 Keith Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, (1957), 14.

2 John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America*, (1978), 8; see Williams to Providence, 22 January 1651, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 330.

3 Arthur Nussbaum, *History of the Dollar*, (1957), 6-7; RI Rec I: 118. Corn was fixed in Massachusetts to ease the problems of debt collection in the economic recession of the early 1640s. See Winthrop, *Journal* II: 31.

4 McCusker, *Money and Exchange*, 118.



forms of 'currency'. In 1662, for example, Rhode Island set out an elaborate table of values when ordering a tax for agent John Clarke. Beef, pork, peas or wheat were acceptable according to their fixed values, and payment in coin was also welcomed. Colonists could pay forty shillings worth of agricultural goods, thirty shillings in New England coinage or- best of all from the colony's viewpoint- twenty-two shillings and sixpence in English coin.<sup>1</sup>

The New England colonies developed their fiscal systems at different rates, and the Bay Colony was in general the most advanced in the mid-seventeenth century. Taxation was an established part of life in Massachusetts from the early years of the colony onwards. The Bay Company moved to New England with a governmental structure already established and officers- including a Treasurer- in place. This is not to say that the new colony was financially secure from the outset, but it did at least establish early precedents for the sort of specifically allocated taxes which later became the norm for agency funding. On 28 September 1630, the Massachusetts General Court ordered the collection of £50 for the maintenance of Captains Patrick and Underhill, with the money to come, in differing amounts, from nine communities. Such taxes, levied on the colony as a whole with clear percentages to come from each town, continued to be used for capital projects in Massachusetts, such as the construction of defensive palisades.<sup>2</sup> It also became the standard means of raising taxes for agents throughout New England.<sup>3</sup>

In the Rhode Island towns, fiscal matters were

1 Raising money for Clarke occupied most of the agenda at the meeting of Rhode Island's Court of Commissioners on 17 June 1662. See *RI Rec I*: 480-483.

2 *Mass Rec I*: 77, 93.

3 Examples of this method of funding from Edward Winslow's mission and that of John Clarke respectively are in *Mass Rec III*: 118-9; *RI Rec I*: 422, 480.

rather less organised than in Massachusetts. Perhaps the most fundamental difference was that individual Rhode Island towns operated their own taxation before any colony-wide institutions were established. Many Rhode Islanders had some moveable wealth, and also property in the Bay Colony which they were able to sell. This is particularly true of the group which settled Aquidneck in the aftermath of the Antinomian dispute.<sup>1</sup> With the founding of towns around the Narragansett Bay, the new settlers contributed to the town treasury in relation to the amount of land they owned; Providence and Portsmouth both set the level of payment soon after the first arrivals in the region, and appointed treasurers to hold the resultant income for the good of the community.<sup>2</sup>

Local taxation continued to be the norm in Rhode Island until the colony's central authority became stronger after the arrival of the 1663 charter. Only in extreme cases during earlier years did the colonists attempt to levy taxes over all four towns simultaneously. Fittingly, the first ever colony-wide tax in Rhode Island was intended to pay £100 to their first agent, Roger Williams. The tax was announced by the fledgling union of the towns on 19 May 1647, when the colony voted to compensate Williams for his "so great travail, charges and good endeavours." It is indicative of the insecurity of the Narragansett communities that their first cooperative fiscal action was to pay an agent for his efforts in securing some legal identity for them.<sup>3</sup>

Despite their willingness to organise systems of taxation, all the New England colonies were still forced to rely on informal, voluntary systems when faced with urgent demands on their treasuries. Since most agency missions were organised in a hurry, initial funding was

1 William Coddington's sale of £1300 worth of property in Massachusetts is the most striking example.

2 *RI Rec I*: 15 (Providence, 3 Dec. 1636), 56 (Portsmouth, 27 June 1638).

3 See *RI Rec I*: 152.



often supplied by leading colonists offering loans and advances on taxes. The Rhode Island towns in particular recognised that mechanisms for the collection of taxes could be shaky when pressed too far, and preferred to use coercion as a last resort after first trying to appeal to their inhabitants' generosity. In 1661 and again the following year, the Rhode Island General Court called for contributions toward securing a new charter from the restored monarchy. After only £40 of the £200 requested had been raised, the colony reluctantly resorted to a tax, with penalties for non-payers.<sup>1</sup> Even in well-organised Massachusetts, though, loans were requested in times of great anxiety: the colony had to promise to repay the donors of £100 raised to dispatch Edward Winslow in 1646.<sup>2</sup>

While colonies were generally able to overcome fiscal problems sufficiently to dispatch a mission, agents were under no illusions that such efforts would be maintained for long. Roger Williams' second mission, in 1651, is a good example. The people of Providence and Shawomet were worried enough by the activities of both William Coddington and Massachusetts to raise considerable sums voluntarily to meet the initial costs of sending Williams to England. William Arnold, who led the Massachusetts-oriented faction in Providence, noted that £100 had been raised with alarming speed on the mainland, and that some individuals in Shawomet had been giving £10-20 each, such was their concern for the situation.<sup>3</sup> In the longer term, however, this led to a reluctance to pay any further taxes to support the agent. Williams must have anticipated this, because shortly before leaving for England he sold his trading post at Cocumscussoc on the Narragansett Bay to Richard Smith,

1 *RI Rec I*: 480.

2 Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 309.

3 See Arnold to Massachusetts, 5 September 1651, in *Hutchinson Papers*, I: 267-8.

ensuring that his family would at least be provided for in his absence.<sup>1</sup> This was a wise precaution; in June 1652, the Providence town accounts include only £18 paid to Williams- just under half the town's share of his maintenance, with a further £5 paid to his wife.<sup>2</sup>

Williams experiences were by no means unique, and they reflect the difficulties involved in maintaining financial support once an agent was an ocean away from his colony. Raising money to pay for an initial sea passage was possible within the bounds of the colonies' own 'domestic' economy, but the ongoing financing of missions over long periods of time had to fit the wider context of transatlantic trade. Systems for transferring funds across the ocean were already in place by the mid-seventeenth century, and colonies which were determined to arrange for the support of their agents had a range of methods available to them. The transatlantic merchant community was already operating successfully at this time and colonial authorities made frequent use of their contacts and resources.

New Englanders conducted most of their trade with England. This relationship, despite later criticism of the Navigation Acts and other mercantile laws, was not forced on unwilling colonial merchants. New England merchants in the seventeenth century and beyond traded with the mother country in large part because the habit of trading with friends and family in England made transatlantic commerce less risky than it would otherwise have been. This was, of course, equally true for English creditors, who were more willing to ship goods to colonial kinsmen, or to members of their local trading

1 See Williams to John Winthrop, jr., in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 351. Williams' poverty may in part have been due to his reported habit of giving money away to the needy. See Brunkow, "Office Holding in Providence RI 1646-1686: A Quantitative Analysis." *WMQ* 37 (1980): 246(n).

2 *Providence Rec*, XV: 63.

circles who had emigrated.<sup>1</sup>

Even when New Englanders looked beyond the home country for trading opportunities, there was very often an English component in such diversification. Trade could in many cases still be conducted with personal acquaintances, and this is testimony to the wide-ranging activities of English merchants. The Canaries and Spain provided a market for fish, cereals and timber, whilst offering wine and sugar in return. As the 1650s progressed, a similar trade developed between New England and the Caribbean, and the links between London merchants and both these regions meant that New Englanders could send produce to the island colonies for bills of exchange drawn in England, enabling a triangular shipping pattern to emerge.<sup>2</sup> It was from this trading network that the means of financing colonial agents had to be found.

Just as the regular patterns of trade had some effect on the transport of agents themselves, seasonal factors could also pose problems for the sudden financial requirements of an agency. Most major traders followed the pattern of shipping textiles and manufactures to the colony in the summer, and waiting until the harvest could be brought in to provide a cargo for the eastward voyage in the autumn. After a quarter-century in America, leading Massachusetts settlers still noted with some unease that most clothing had to be imported from England in this fashion.<sup>3</sup> Such a timetable

1 The kin-based trading systems of the English Atlantic are considered in Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, (1955), 35-6.

2 Bailyn, *New England Merchants*, 85.

3 Massachusetts merchant and mint-master John Hull noted in 1656 the departure of ships carrying "the sum of the returns of the country this year unto England, as is usual every year, we yet having our clothing (most of it) from thence." See Hull, "The Diaries of John Hull: Mintmaster and Treasurer of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay." *Archaeologia Americana: Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* 3 (1857): 179.



meant that there could be some urgency in the arrangements, because heavily laden merchant ships needed to sail before their cargoes began to deteriorate. A delay in bringing in the harvest for shipment could mean a breakdown in the network of transatlantic credits, which in turn reduced agents' ability to request loans from merchants in London on the promise of repayment from the colony purse. Thus in 1662, the Connecticut government ordered a general commandeering of boats, carts and people in a hurried effort to ensure that the cereal harvest reached New London on time; the drive succeeded, and John Winthrop's mission was greatly assisted.<sup>1</sup>

The Rhode Island towns also had to deal with the problem of having to wait for the harvest in the summer of 1662, when they attempted to raise money for John Clarke's continued quest for a new charter. The colony's cereal farmers were told that they must either contribute in cash or send horses to Barbados to raise money. Those who were ready to slaughter animals at that time could pay the tax in pork or beef.<sup>2</sup> Despite this effort, Rhode Island could not match the centralised efficiency of the Connecticut government, having to rely on individual towns to collect goods, rather than arrange a single, rapid collection on a colony-wide basis.

Clarke himself was highly critical of the colony's limited attempts to support him. "I have very much marveled", he wrote to Rhode Island, "how you could satisfy yourselves all this time without sending me suitable supply whereby I might manage that business with good success to which you engaged me." Considering the magnitude of the threat to the colony, Clarke argued, the authorities had to an amazing degree failed to take the

1 *Conn Rec I*: 385-6, 392, 400.

2 *RI Rec I*: 482



necessary action.<sup>1</sup> The previous decade, Roger Williams had levelled similar complaints at his employers in Rhode Island. Williams complained that he had been sent to perform tasks "of a costly and high nature for so many days and weeks and months together, and there left to starve or steal, or beg or borrow."<sup>2</sup>

While Rhode Island tried to muddle on with its established practices, Massachusetts developed some innovative ideas for funding agents as early as 1650. Rhode Island's attempts to support agents could easily degenerate into factional squabbling with the result that agents were forgotten: in Massachusetts, more mature political and fiscal structures sought alternative means of funding agents rather than ignoring them altogether.

Massachusetts came up with a variety of potential solutions to the long-term funding problem, all of which involved persuading someone else to foot at least part of the bill. The colony had always been keen to gather contributions from sympathisers in England for a variety of purposes including education and Indian conversion. It was a small step from that to using such donations for agency funding. In addition, the Bay was the largest member of the Confederation of the United Colonies, and hoped to make the agency a cooperative enterprise, involving contributions from the other New England settlements.

Matters came to a head during Edward Winslow's agency. On 19 October 1649, the Massachusetts General Court wrote to Winslow thanking him for his service and recommending that he return to America. The agent had previously written to the General Court requesting that he be relieved of his commission, and the colony noted in return its "own present charge and inability to accommodate [Winslow] with suitable and comfortable

1 John Clarke to General Court of Rhode Island, "June 1662?" in Winthrop MSS, reel 7.

2 Roger Williams to Providence Town, ca. August 1654, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 400.

allowance", as well as the fact that the deepening political crisis in England meant that there was little chance of the colony being threatened by London.<sup>1</sup> Within a year, however, while Winslow stayed in England to seek employment under the new Commonwealth, it had become clear that Massachusetts might still have need of an agent in England. English republicans showed signs of taking a much more active role in colonial affairs than had their predecessors in government. Such moves took on their most threatening appearance with legislation banning trade with royalist plantations in America and implying parliamentary sovereignty over all the colonies.

However important Winslow was, Massachusetts did not immediately agree to continue financing him, but rather tried to persuade the other members of the United Colonies to contribute to the agent's support. The Bay's representatives presented an appeal to the Commissioners in September 1650.<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts argued that Winslow had always been working on behalf of the wider interests of the United Colonies, and that the organisation as a whole should consider sending the agent "some honourable and equal recompense" for his work. Furthermore, the Bay Colony argued that more funds should be provided because Winslow's continued presence in London was crucial to the work of spreading the gospel, and quoted a letter to that effect from the President of the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel, William Steele.

The Commissioners were unimpressed. Massachusetts, they observed, had never shared the services of their agent with the other colonies, nor had the Bay consulted with them at the time of Winslow's departure in 1646. The United Colonies were willing to acknowledge the importance of Winslow to the evangelical cause, but only to the extent of authorising a payment of £100 to be made to the agent from the funds of the Corporation. In fact,

1 *Mass Rec* III: 178.

2 *Plymouth Rec* IX: 161-2.

Massachusetts had asked both Plymouth and New Haven if they wished to contribute to the costs of Winslow's mission in 1646.<sup>1</sup> Exactly what the people of Plymouth thought of this is unknown, given the fact that Winslow was one of their leading men and had been 'borrowed' by the Bay Colony in the first place.

In the event, Winslow stayed in England, funded partly by the Corporation and partly by the Commonwealth government, which paid him for his work as a Compounding Commissioner. He continued to lobby the authorities on behalf of both Massachusetts and Plymouth, and was in that sense very much an ideal agent. Committed to the survival of the United Colonies, Winslow was willing to obstruct the petitions of others even after his formal commission and wages from the Bay Colony lapsed.

However confused and inefficient agency funding was, no mission actually failed through financial problems in this period. Rhode Island's agents suffered personal hardship and had to rely on the good nature of their English friends and supporters, but they all achieved their aims. While agents believed that their successes depended on luck rather than good planning and support, colonies thought that agents exaggerated the difficulties and expenses of working in England. Such differing perceptions of the financial reality of missions continued to be the main point of contention in the post-mission relationship between colonies and agents.

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Once their missions were completed, agents faced a variety of possibilities. The nature of missions in this period, with agents generally being sent to perform specific short-term tasks, meant that most agents might have been expected to return to the colonies after a year or two in England. As has been noted, however, there was

<sup>1</sup> Mass Rec III: 79.

a considerable variety in the length of missions, and also in the time spent by agents in England after their missions were effectively over. As a general rule, the longer an agent spent in England, the more tangled his relationship with his colony became. Agents usually had many loose ends to tie when they returned to New England. Money remained a problem, and the ambiguous results of some missions led to protracted squabbling. In Rhode Island, for example, John Clarke was still in dispute with the colony over his wages a dozen years after his mission, while different factions in Massachusetts argued over the extent to which Simon Bradstreet and John Norton had drawn unwelcome attention to the colony. This section will consider such ongoing strains between agents and colonies, and also some of the more lasting effects that being an agent had on the careers of individuals.

Financial questions made up the most important grievance held by agents on the completion of their missions. After agents had returned to the colonies, the nature of the funding question shifted from the need to provide resources for the conduct of a mission, to concerns about paying an agent a sum in reward for his services, and sometimes in repayment for expenses incurred. Neither of these new concerns inspired the sort of efforts associated with the raising of money at the very start of a mission.

The gradual decline in a colony's willingness to allocate funds to agents over the course of their missions is typified by the case of Rhode Island agent John Clarke. Clarke's anger at his colony's failure to provide him with operational funds has already been mentioned, but a whole new round of controversy began with the agent's return to New England in 1664. Although money was the main issue, the dispute took on the same pattern as the political row over the Williams-Clarke mission in 1652. The mainland towns, and particularly Shawomet, revived old objections to Clarke and even condemned Roger Williams when he attempted to intervene



on Clarke's behalf.

The people of Shawomet had done good service in financing Roger Williams on his second mission to England, and were to a degree justified when they argued that Clarke was acting for the island towns and was therefore not their responsibility. Equally, Shawomet could argue truthfully that Samuel Gorton and his colleagues had received nothing from the colony purse for their voyage to England in 1646. The English government's support for the Gortonists then had deterred further Massachusetts incursion onto Rhode Island territory, and thereby headed off a serious threat to the rest of the colony towns. In the light of this, Shawomet felt that its neighbours had been less than suitably grateful.

Much of the Shawomet argument focused on alternative means of paying Clarke's wages. In the first place, the townsfolk noted that Clarke had been active as a preacher and polemical author in London, and that this had doubtless "brought him in good means for his maintenance". Even if Clarke had not made much from his moonlighting activities (and it is hard to argue that he returned from England having made his fortune), there were others in the colony who should be charged before the Shawomet men. Pomham's Indians, living on Shawomet Neck, had "injuriously intruded" upon the best lands of the town, argued the Shawomet settlers, and should "be caused to pay for their so doing." In addition, there were Englishmen who had betrayed the colony and who should be fined to pay Clarke's fees. Although it is not stated explicitly, the Shawomet men were doubtless referring to their old adversaries in the Arnold faction, the Atherton planters who sought to occupy the Narragansett Country, and possibly even William Coddington- the townsmen had not forgotten Coddington's dealings with Massachusetts and the Dutch in the 1640s.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shawomet's position is expressed at length in a letter to the Governor and Council of Rhode Island, 12 December 1664, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 544-550.

Roger Williams tried to mediate in the quarrel, but with little success. He wrote to Shawomet, arguing that Clarke had done great service to all parts of the colony, and that the tax being demanded on the agent's behalf was a "very moderate and equal sum."<sup>1</sup> Williams' plea earned him a stiff rebuke from the Shawomet settlers, who read his letter in public at their next meeting before condemning it as 'pernicious' and claiming that it was intended to "stir up strife, division and contention in the town."<sup>2</sup>

Clarke was never able to settle his affairs completely after his twelve year absence from Rhode Island. His most serious difficulty was a debt incurred in 1665, when he mortgaged his house and land in Newport to Richard Deane of London for £140. Over the next six years Clarke paid back £136, but by the time of his death in 1676 still owed some £50 in interest.<sup>3</sup> This was despite the fact that prior to his securing the loan, the General Assembly had decided that Clarke was owed a total of £343 13s 6d for his agency.<sup>4</sup> Just how much of this was ever paid is unclear; in 1673, Clarke made a final appeal to the colony for £450, and this was in turn rejected by the General Assembly.<sup>5</sup>

Clarke's later problems were in part due to continuing grudges held by William Coddington, who had been rehabilitated into Newport life by the 1670s. The Newport elite which dominated the Rhode Island assembly for once shared part of the view of the Gortonists, arguing that Clarke originally went to England as much for his own reasons as for the good of the colony.

1 See Williams to Warwick [Shawomet], 1 January 1666, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 535.

2 See Howard M. Chapin ed., *The Early Records of the Town of Warwick*, (1926), 162.

3 Richard Deane to the Executors of the Estate of John Clarke, 5 May 1680, *Providence Rec*, XV: 204-5.

4 RI Rec II: 79.

5 RI Rec II: 514.

William Coddington, whose commission as Governor Clarke had been sent to England to overturn, was by this point firmly back in the ruling circle of the colony, and it is likely that Coddington could not resist one final strike against his old adversary. Coddington also had a circle of supporters in positions of influence around him, including his son-in-law, leading merchant Peleg Sanford.<sup>1</sup>

Clarke's case is an extreme one, because it rekindled a range of old resentments which had smouldered since the early 1650s. Rhode Island's decision not to send a new agent to deal with the restored monarchy certainly saved some money in the short term, in that any replacement for Clarke would have needed the sort of initial funding described above.<sup>2</sup> Such short term thinking created a range of other problems, however. If Clarke had not been recommissioned, his finances would have been much more straightforward regardless of whether he returned to Rhode Island after the Restoration. As has been noted, the tone of Clarke's relations with the colony in the later stages of his mission may well imply that he regretted having revived his agency after such a long period of inactivity.

However much Clarke and his neighbours may have squabbled over money, the agent's political abilities were never in doubt. Clarke went on to be Deputy Governor of Rhode Island in the 1670s, and stayed in high office throughout the period when his finances were in dispute. Such ambiguities in Clarke's later career are a reflection of the balance which Rhode Island had to strike between indulging in factional bickering and recognising that leadership was not so common a quality as to be lightly squandered.

Massachusetts also had a mixed record in terms of

1 For Coddington's rehabilitation, see Henry E. Turner, *William Coddington in Rhode Island Affairs*, (1878), 52.

2 The question of whether to send a new agent or revive Clarke's commission occupied Rhode Island through much of 1660 and 1661. See Chapter 3 above.



its treatment of agents whose missions had run their course. Those who actually returned to the colony tended to prosper, but those who remained in England permanently endured sometimes frosty relations with their erstwhile neighbours. Money was an enduring problem for those who stayed in England, but for those who returned, Massachusetts once again found a way of satisfying its treasury and its agents simultaneously.

Massachusetts usually rewarded its agents with a combination of public office and land. While good quality land within the protected coastal areas of New England was never abundant, it was still easier for the colonial authorities to acquire and distribute than was any kind of monetary medium. John Leveret in particular was given considerable tracts of land in the early 1660s. In May 1662 he was granted a total of one thousand acres for his "services for the country both in England and here."<sup>1</sup> The following year, Leveret was commissioned Major-General, and he went on to reach the pinnacle of political life a decade later when he was elected Governor of Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> Leveret's successor in the agency Simon Bradstreet was eventually to join him on the roll of colony governors. Arguably, both these men were destined for such high office even before their missions, but it is still important that serving as agent was considered a positive part of their climb up the political ladder.

Two of the Bay Colony's first three agents had a much more negative experience. While William Hibbins returned to New England and became a colony magistrate, Thomas Weld and Hugh Peter remained in England and became ever more estranged from Massachusetts. Weld and Peter were formally recalled by the Bay in 1645, after three years of being badly distracted from their mission. The agents been initially successful in acquiring immunity from customs for Massachusetts and also in their fund-

1 *Mass Rec* IV part 2: 56.

2 *Mass Rec* IV part 2: 80.



raising activities, but it was hard to maintain momentum. Hugh Peter's absence from London during the civil wars left Weld alone, and in 1645 Weld suggested to Massachusetts that they transfer his commission to London merchant James Pocock.<sup>1</sup>

In the years which followed Massachusetts treated Weld and Peter shabbily. It is unclear who first suggested that the agents were guilty of misappropriating funds donated for the conversion of Indians and the transport of orphans to New England: English Presbyterian Thomas Edwards certainly made the most of the scandal and it may well have been a sectarian plot from the beginning. Massachusetts, though, never moved to defend their former agents, and indeed allowed Weld and Peter to take the blame until the New England Company discovered in 1650 that the irregularities had actually taken place in the colonies, and that the Bay leadership had used the agents as scapegoats to hide its own guilt.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, Hugh Peter discovered in the years following his mission that part of his property was being quietly annexed by his neighbours. It was clear from the mid-1640s onward that despite his protestations to the contrary, Peter had no intention of re-crossing the Atlantic, and this encouraged his less scrupulous acquaintances to take some of his property at greatly undervalued prices as repayment for his debts.<sup>3</sup> While Peter undoubtedly had a grievance here, it must also be said that others with whom he did business made no attempt to defraud him. This was especially true toward the end of his life, when the resentment felt by many in Massachusetts over his 'abandonment' of the colony had

1 Stearns, *Strenuous Puritan*, 173.

2 See Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 233.

3 Peter to John Winthrop, in *Winthrop Papers* V: 158.

faded.<sup>1</sup>

The Weld/Peter case is the only example of permanent estrangement between agents and their colony in this period. Given the troubles already noted involving other agents, like Williams, Clarke and Bradstreet, it is surprising that there were no more instances of bitter discontent. It is, though, no coincidence that Weld and Peter proved to be the exceptions. John Endecott's original doubts about Peter's commitment to the future of Massachusetts seem well borne out by the agent's immersion in English affairs, and both agents gave the impression- justified or not- that they cared more for the troubles of England than they did for the problems of their employers.<sup>2</sup>

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The colonial authorities learned from some of the mistakes of the first generation missions. The clearest manifestation of their efforts to make the institution more manageable is the gradual formalisation of procedures surrounding missions, especially in Massachusetts. In part, as has been noted, colonies wished to impose more controls on their agents' activities as the period progressed, but there was also a wish to avoid a repetition of the worst misunderstandings and scandals.

Massachusetts recognised that questions of funding for colonial enterprises were especially controversial, and tried to set up a variety of methods by which this issue could be handled in a more circumspect manner. Not all the steps taken were administered in the colonies.

1 For example, George Curwin of Salem sent Peter £80 in payment for land in 1660. See Essex Institute, Curwin Family MSS, 20 Dec. 1660.

2 Endecott was suspicious of Peter as a worldly cleric, and believed he might be inclined to abandon Massachusetts for the West Indies. See chapter 3 above.

Massachusetts pressed for the creation of the New England Company, which would act as a respectable conduit for money for missionary activities. The agent most involved in this move had also learned lessons from the past: Edward Winslow was careful not to become victim to the sort of troubles experienced by Thomas Weld. Although Winslow was by a long way the most vocal and persuasive of those who agitated for the gospel propagation enterprise, he never became involved in the attendant financial matters. New England Company President William Steele wrote to the Commissioners of the United Colonies in 1651 that "Mr Winslow will by no means be persuaded to meddle with the receipts of money."<sup>1</sup> Winslow's commitment to the cause of New England was matched only by his knowledge of the attitudes and potential failings of the colonial leadership.

Part of the formalisation of agents' relations with their colonies is clearly demonstrated in the second wave of agency activity, which was much more bureaucratically organised than the first. Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut all appointed committees to oversee their missions to Charles II, and in particular the ever-present financial questions. Such formalisation was partly an attempt to avoid some of the ambiguities of earlier missions, but it also reflects a more general stabilisation of government across New England. Colonial authorities had moved beyond ad hoc administration by the time of the Restoration, and were keen to operate the kind of stable governmental structures familiar to the English on both sides of the Atlantic. Agents in the 1660s had become firmly established in the political culture of the colonies, with generally accepted administrative mechanisms to go with them.

In Massachusetts, the organisation of the Bradstreet/Norton mission in 1661/2 demonstrates the extent to which factions within the colonial leadership

<sup>1</sup> *Plymouth Rec* IX: 194.

had learned to institutionalise their conflicts. Opposition to the mission came from Governor Endecott and his deputy Richard Bellingham, but supporters of the venture also held high office in the ranks of the colony magistrates. No longer were opponents of the Bay's top officials always outcasts and dissidents- they were equally likely to be members of the colonial elite themselves. The bureaucratisation of the mission owes much to political intriguing on the part of these rival groups. The committee formed to oversee the mission was loaded with more conservative members opposed to the mission, but this manoeuvre back-fired when Endecott and Bellingham boycotted the proceedings, leaving a moderate majority.<sup>1</sup>

Once free to go about its work, the committee began to pull together all the elements of agency activity which had emerged in the previous two decades. Documentary evidence, as has been noted, was the central plank of most agents' appeals: the committee ordered the colony secretary to transcribe and pass to the agents all the

proceedings of the court concerning Gorton and his company, Rhode Island, the ironworks, the Quakers, Piscataqua, Dr. Child and his company, Mr. Hiieldersham, the Lords' letters about appeals, reasons political for these plantations, two copies of the patent, petition to the King, and such other as he shall see needful....<sup>2</sup>

The agents were as well financed as they were laden with documents. The committee kept a careful ledger of the £425 contributed by fifteen men for the finance of the mission, and placed merchant William Davis in overall charge of fiscal matters.<sup>3</sup> When John Norton fell ill, the committee negotiated with the captain of the ship which

1 For the mission's place within the wider context of Restoration Massachusetts, see Paul R. Lucas, "Colony or Commonwealth: Massachusetts Bay 1661-1666." *WMQ* 24 (1967): 88-107, esp. 93-95.

2 *Hutchinson Papers* II: 67.

3 *Hutchinson Papers* II: 83.



was waiting expensively in harbour to carry the agents to England.

The final Massachusetts mission of the period was a model of organisation, and a good example for the future formalisation of permanent agencies. Using committees could only achieve so much however. To be sure, Bradstreet and Norton were never accused of the sort of financial irregularities which haunted the Bay Colony's first agents. On the other hand, many in Massachusetts refused to believe that the agents had remained true to their instructions and had diligently resisted all English attempts to intervene in colonial affairs. No matter how organised missions became, fundamental doubts and misconceptions about the relationship between England and the colonies could not easily be overcome, and agents, as always, bore the brunt of consequent criticism.

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The single most striking trend in the relationship between agents and colonies in this period is therefore one of increasing control and formalisation on the part of the colonial authorities. This evolution came about for two reasons: the desire to limit the discretionary powers of agents by formulating specific and limiting orders, and a need to overcome practical difficulties caused by both a lack of organisation in the colonies and embarrassing financial irregularities in the handling of charitable donations. The trend had some success on both fronts, but the advantages were felt more strongly by colonies than by agents. It is fortunate for the New England settlements that most agents had interests in England which made them willing to undertake missions despite the difficulties they were likely to face in dealing with their employers, and it is to such concerns that the next chapter turns.

### Means of Persuasion: Agents and Transatlantic Attitudes

The preceding chapters have placed some emphasis on themes of ambivalence, misunderstanding, ignorance and disappointment in the transatlantic relationship, and such problems come to the fore in the English activities of agents. It is vital to remember that agents did not operate in a vacuum, petitioning England's leaders for sterile administrative documents before taking the first opportunity to return to the colonies. Many agents interpreted their role widely, and tried to present their cases to a far larger group of people than London's politicians and officials. Petitioning governments was their primary concern, of course, and this large topic will be considered at length in the remaining chapters of this study, but it is necessary first to examine the broader canvas of agency work.

Agents were not the only people who divided their time between the colonies and England in the mid-seventeenth century. This fact had a range of implications for agents and their work, and also for the broader sweep of transatlantic relations. The presence of colonials who were old acquaintances could make life easier for agents as they tried to organise finances, pamphleteering, or meetings with English leaders. At the same time, the activities of other colonials could either directly or indirectly damage agents' missions: agents from rival colonies inevitably tried to thwart each others' plans, and the behaviour of some high profile ex-colonists in the religious and political controversies of the 1640s threatened to tar others with the same brush. This wider question of the general image of the American colonies is crucial, and particularly so in the case of

New England. Agents were able to mould that image, but they were also limited by it, and by the preconceived ideas it generated among their English hosts.

Religion, so much a part of New England's image (and self-image), is central to the reception accorded agents by their audience in England. Ecclesiastical credentials were at once the most useful passport and heaviest millstone an agent could carry. In making the case for their colony, agents could guarantee a receptive hearing from co-religionists, but they could also expect a sharply negative response from those who disapproved of the practices of either agent or colony, or both. Some agents, who did not match the religious stereotype of their colony, found themselves condemned for opinions they did not in fact hold, and colonies were similarly attacked for the views of their agents.

For Massachusetts agents, religion was a largely negative factor, because the Bay Colony drew condemnation from various English groups ranging from those who opposed Congregational church government to those Congregationalists who favoured toleration of other churches. Importantly, though, Rhode Island was rarely singled out for criticism, despite having agents like Samuel Gorton and Roger Williams who were much further from the mainstream than even the more radical Bay ministers.

Another major issue was the relationship between New Englanders and Indians. Agents made a range of contributions here, but often found themselves on the defensive in the face of criticism of colonial efforts at conversion. Once again, Massachusetts bore the brunt of negative comment, and Rhode Island's record in Indian affairs emerged with some credit. Both Roger Williams and Samuel Gorton included evidence of their dealings with Indians in their petitions and pamphlets, taking every opportunity to discredit the Bay's methods.

Battles over all these issues were fought largely by exchanges of polemical pamphlets published by the agents

concerned, and these documents demonstrate a range of relatively sophisticated propaganda techniques. Agents published widely during the 1640s, producing tracts which had little direct relevance to their missions as well as extended petitions and appeals relating to their particular causes. Overall, eagerness to use the printing press as a weapon contributed to the effectiveness of many agents. A large amount of evidence about agents' views and methods may be gleaned from their pamphlets, which stand as the most striking proof that agents were willing and able to play a full role in English affairs during their missions.

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The first step in putting agency work in its wider context is an examination of those other New Englanders who made a contribution to events in England in this period. Remigration has already been mentioned as a problem in 1640s Massachusetts, and recent studies suggest that a large number of first generation settlers returned to England either permanently or for extended periods. Such a pattern reinforces the idea that England and the colonies were not divided by an impenetrable barrier, and that a significant proportion of colonial settlers did not necessarily see their journey to America as an irrevocable action. Some made several return trips before settling permanently on one side of the ocean or the other, more travelled back once, and more still left evidence of continuing doubts about whether they had made the correct decision: some of the last group would probably have returned had they been able to raise the money. This section considers some of those who crossed the Atlantic more than once, and the effect they had on the activities of agents.

The first scholar to embark on a major study of early American remigration was William L. Sachse, who argued that colonials saw opportunity in returning to



England as well as in the more traditional historiographical model of westward expansion. Sachse's work was mainly concerned with the eighteenth century, but he also identified earlier cases in which England seemed to present possibilities unavailable in the colonies. In particular, Sachse noted that many New Englanders sought employment and advancement in England during the interregnum: New England ministers, many of them early Harvard graduates, returned to England in numbers between 1640 and 1660 to seek positions vacated by Laud's clergy, while military men found employment with Parliament's armies and later with the Protectorate.<sup>1</sup>

Some recent work has delved a little more deeply into the motivation of remigrants and has also, importantly, considered the attitudes of remaining colonists toward those who left. Remigration had always been a characteristic of life in Massachusetts, but the English Civil War made it harder to dismiss those who returned as weak backsliders. While individual remigrants could be both a help and a hindrance to agents, the phenomenon of remigration itself proved to be a taxing issue for agents in the 1640s. Critics of New England pounced on the eastward traffic as evidence of colonial failure and discontent, and New Englanders themselves suffered doubts about their mission.<sup>2</sup>

Two of the Bay Colony's first agents were, ironically, to join the ranks of those who returned permanently to England, but at the beginning of their mission they vigorously defended colonial practices and condemned those who left the colony. In *New Englands*

1 Sachse, "The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640-1660", *AHR* 53 (1948): 251-278; also his *The Colonial American in Britain*, Madison, WN (1956), especially 89-92, 132-145.

2 The most recent work on the subject includes David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century*, (1987), 191-212; Andrew Delbanco, "Looking Homeward, Going Home" *NEQ* 59 (1986): 358-386.

*First Fruits*, Thomas Weld called up a theological allegory and extended a medieval view of Ireland to encompass the New England colonies. As Ireland cannot brook venomous beasts, wrote Weld, so New England will have no "vile persons, and loose livers."<sup>1</sup> Weld may have been trying to achieve a number of things in using this metaphor. An educated audience would have recognised his paraphrasing of Bede, thus helping to maintain the agent's reputation for serious scholarship. Perhaps more importantly, the equation of a New England that was anathema to the degenerate with a place that was free from serpents is a clear attempt to portray the colonies as a godly paradise untouched by evil and temptation.<sup>2</sup>

If the general question of remigration posed problems for Massachusetts agents, individual remigrants could be even more embarrassing. Throughout this period, vocal and knowledgeable ex-colonists threatened to undermine the careful propaganda being disseminated by agents and colonial authorities, quite apart from any damage being inflicted by rival agents. Many critics had specific grievances which stemmed from a particular incident, while others acted in semi-permanent opposition to the colonies in general or- more usually- to Massachusetts.

Probably the most vocal and long-standing critic of the Bay Colony was the aptly-named Samuel Maverick, who maintained a regular criticism of religious and social policy in Massachusetts for more than three decades. Much of his time was spent in New England, and his career as an anti-Massachusetts agitator reached its peak in the early 1660s when he bombarded the Earl of Clarendon with complaints about the Bay's operation as a 'free state'.

1 Weld, *New Englands First Fruits*, (1643), 24.

2 Bede wrote that in Ireland "there are no reptiles, and no snake can exist there". See Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, 2nd Penguin edn. (1968), 39. For a further discussion of Bede's use of this allegory, see J M Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, (1988), 9.

Many critics of the Bay Colony had, like Maverick, been interested in settlements on the fringes of Massachusetts and objected to Boston's expansionist tendencies. Although such voices were heard most clearly in the early 1660s, remigrants were a regular source of opposition to Massachusetts agents throughout this period.<sup>1</sup>

If some ex-colonists made life difficult for agents, there were also many who provided invaluable assistance. One problem facing students of the agency is to determine the mechanics of agency work, and in particular how agents went about making contact with friends, colleagues and sympathisers. Those studying the eighteenth century agency have identified London's coffee houses as an important element in the lives of agents: persons interested in the colonies tended to congregate in particular establishments, and an agent could make useful contacts and keep abreast of news.<sup>2</sup>

While coffee houses did not become commonplace in London until the later seventeenth century, there is evidence that bookshops served a similar function for at least some of the first generation agents. The clientele was of course not restricted to colonials, and bookshops were also informal meeting places for London's intelligentsia.<sup>3</sup> When William Coddington was in England in 1650 seeking his commission as Governor of Aquidneck he had a chance meeting with Stephen Winthrop at Giles Calvert's shop. Winthrop- son of the Massachusetts governor and younger brother of Connecticut's John Winthrop, jr.- had been helped out of an awkward financial dispute in 1645 by Sir Henry Vane, and was,

1 See Chapter 7.

2 Kammen, *A Rope of Sand*, 115-120; also, and more generally, Sachse, *The Colonial American in Britain*, 17-18.

3 W. Clark Gilpin argues that Dexter's print shop "may well have been an important setting for Williams' reintroduction to the English religious and political scene." Gilpin, *The Millenarian Piety of Roger Williams*, (1979), 68.



like Vane, a committed tolerationist. Coddington reintroduced Winthrop to Vane, and relied on both men for further contacts during his stay in England.<sup>1</sup> Vane in particular was central to Coddington's plans, because of his high profile in the Commonwealth Government and his involvement in the committee which heard Coddington's petition.<sup>2</sup>

Another measure of the importance to agents of the publishing business is found in their relationships with printers. Printers were high on the list of contacts for agents arriving in London. Many agents travelled to England having already decided that they would present their views in print, and a number of tracts were composed during the Atlantic crossing. Roger Williams, for example, noted in the preface to *A Key into the Language of America* that he had drafted the work while sailing to England.<sup>3</sup>

Close contact with printers and booksellers allowed agents to keep track of their opponents and respond to criticisms appearing in print. Williams also offers an example of the sort of long-term contact which could be maintained between some agents and their printers. During his 1643-4 mission he quickly formed a close friendship with printer Gregory Dexter, who subsequently followed Williams to Rhode Island and became a leading figure in the colony. Williams may have come to regret Dexter's move to America, however, because while New England benefited from the printer's skills, the agent claimed to have trouble finding a suitable printer during his second

1 See Coddington to John Winthrop, jr., 19 Feb 1652, in *MHS Collections*, 4th series, 7: 281; Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 157. For the dispute between Winthrop and London Alderman Berkeley, see Mass Archives, 2: 489; Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 256.

2 This episode will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

3 See Williams, *Writings*, I: 19.



mission to England.<sup>1</sup> Still, Williams was able to exploit the radical interests and connections of another leading figure in the trade: two of his 1652 pamphlets were printed for the bookseller Giles Calvert.<sup>2</sup>

The most impressive of such connections is that between Edward Winslow and London printer John Bellamy. Bellamy's interest in America was not restricted to publishing Winslow's tracts, and he handled a number of sermons and accounts of Plymouth colony in addition to those carried to England by Winslow.<sup>3</sup>

Some agents relied on special interests or professional skills to establish contacts in England. In part, this may have been only vaguely related to their agency work, but it also put them in touch with educated and often influential people who might have some value to them later. Roger Williams made use of his linguistic abilities to further his friendship with John Milton. The latter's significance as a poet is less important here than his political and administrative role: Milton served as a propagandist for the Parliamentary cause throughout the 1640s and was Latin secretary to the Commonwealth

1 Dexter's work in printing almanacs for the Cambridge press in Massachusetts is revealed in Paul Sternberg "A Note on the Printing of the New England 'Almanacks'", *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, (1984): 356-361. Williams wrote home from London bemoaning having to use "printers men unknown to me", but it is of course possible that he was simply paying Dexter a compliment. See Williams to Dexter, 7 October 1652, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 366.

2 The tracts were *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody* and *The Fourth Paper Presented by Major Butler*. For Calvert's place in London radical circles, see Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, (1975), 373.

3 Bellamy's career as the "'Pilgrim' Publisher" is described in detail in Leona Rostenburg, *Literary, Political, Scientific, Religious and Legal Publishing, Printing and Bookselling in England, 1551-1700*, (1965), vol 1, 97-129.

government.<sup>1</sup>

Connecticut's John Winthrop, jr. was particularly adept at making contacts in a wide intellectual circle. Winthrop pursued new approaches to the English authorities, devoting his efforts to working out which of the new English elite he had best court in order to gain a sympathetic hearing from those in power. Winthrop was something of a physician and chemist, as well as being interested in metallurgy and astronomy, and he used his contacts and correspondents in London's scientific community to point him in the direction of potentially sympathetic royal advisers. The Connecticut agent went on to become the first New Englander to be a member of the new Royal Society, and this brought him respectability, along with expanding his circle of influential acquaintances.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Hartlib, the pioneering educationalist, was among the first to warn Winthrop of the new regime's plans to investigate New England and possibly even send a royal governor. Hartlib urged Winthrop to contact the courtier and physician Benjamin Worsley, who reputedly had Clarendon's respect when it came to colonial matters.<sup>3</sup>

Agents and other colonials could use such personal contacts to put their message across on a limited scale, but there were other cases in which a much wider audience was desirable. The details of such campaigning will be considered later in this chapter, but it is worth noting here the opportunities available to those agents who wished to put their petitions and stories in print.

Published pamphlets are the most visible expression of the messages agents wished to present to their English audience. While important aspects of their work are

1 Williams' contacts with Milton are considered in David Masson, *The Life of John Milton*, 6 vols, (1859-1880), IV: 395-6.

2 Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 217.

3 See Hartlib to Winthrop, 9 October 1661, in Winthrop MSS, reel 6.

revealed in correspondence and in dealings with officialdom, agents made their widest contribution to the period in the pages of their printed tracts. They were greatly assisted in this by the near-collapse of the official censorship system in the early 1640s. Following the flight of Charles I from London in 1642, and despite subsequent attempts by successive regimes to regulate publishing, the presses became the most widely used tool of a host of political and religious groups, as well as individuals seeking publicity for their own particular causes.<sup>1</sup> Agents were no exception, and often printed versions of their petitions accompanied by extensive polemical commentary in the hope that their claims would gain support from influential readers. Many agents' pamphlets, however, had little to do with the mission at hand, but rather expressed personal views on some of England's great issues. As colonial representatives and individual activists alike, agents made a significant contribution to what Hugh Peter called England's "pamphlet-glutted age".<sup>2</sup>

Seven agents were involved in publishing polemical tracts while in England, either as authors or on behalf of people in New England who sent manuscripts to London to be printed. The range of work is indicative of the interests of agents, and also of the kind of controversies which could subsequently surround their work. Roger Williams wrote a series of theological works, mainly advocating religious toleration, as well as a pioneering examination of Indian languages. Thomas Weld wrote promotional tracts for Harvard College and the Indian conversion mission, and published (with an added preface) the elder John Winthrop's account of the Antinomian crisis. Edward Winslow handled the publication

1 Christopher Hill notes the importance of the expansion in printing to the activities of a range of groups in *The World Turned Upside Down*, 17-18.

2 Peter, *Church-Government and Church-Covenant discussed*, (1643), preface (no pagination).

of a range of material describing the conversion of the Indians, as well as condemning the Bay Colony's opponents in pamphlets of his own. Samuel Gorton, John Clarke and William Vassall all wrote tracts complaining about their persecution by Massachusetts. Finally, Hugh Peter wrote more than two dozen tracts, although most were reports of army affairs in the 1640s and had nothing to do with his mission.<sup>1</sup>

Almost all of these works were criticised or supported by other pamphlets penned by a variety of activists and commentators alike. Agents had no monopoly on printed accounts of New England affairs, and neither, for that matter, did other colonials: some of the most vocal supporters and critics of the colonies never left England. The next section begins to examine the broader context of New England's links with English society, starting with the question of religion.

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Matters of faith and church organisation loomed large in transatlantic affairs, and especially in contacts between England and New England. Given the stated religious motivation for the establishment of the New England colonies, the intense theological debates in England during the 1640s, and the religious concerns (professional and otherwise) of many of the agents, it is not surprising that such matters tended to polarise opinion and give much ammunition to English critics. Many colonials had an intense interest in the religious debates and quarrels of the period and contributed to them in writing and by their presence in England: at the same time, many in England watched events in New England to see what lessons could be learned. It is in this field that agents had their most noticeable impact on English society. Here also, they faced the most serious criticism

<sup>1</sup> Agents' works are examined and cited individually throughout this chapter.



of themselves and, by extension, of their colonies. Agents typified the ambivalence of many of their fellow colonists in the 1640s and early 1650s, when they wondered if England or New England was the true venue for the new reformation. The high profile of those agents who also held clerical office inevitably gave New England's dealings with England a religious tone, and ensured that questions of faith and church policy were rarely separate from wider issues involving the northern colonies.

New England's theological experiment was central to conditioning English attitudes toward the colonies, and agents were often trapped by long-standing perceptions over which they had little influence. English critics of Massachusetts church policy attacked agents regardless of the fact that many agents differed considerably from their fellow settlers in religious terms. By the same token, the reaction of English critics to agents' activities could focus unwarranted condemnation on the colonies. Finally, the extent to which agents changed their religious views after spending time in England reflects the different backdrops against which the English, wherever they were, had to find their favoured path to a new church order.

Agents could not have avoided involvement in religious questions, and many of them did not want to try. As has already been noted, half of the first generation agents were preachers of one kind or another. This statistic reflects the high standing of religious leaders in the New England colonies, both as leaders of local communities and as an ecclesiastical 'think-tank' often consulted by the colonial government. More importantly, though, the involvement of the clergy meant that many agents were placed in a situation in England in which they were expected to take a stance in the events of the period both as individuals and as representatives of religiously-inspired colonies.

Anyone with strong theological views had plenty opportunity to express them before a wide audience in

1640s England. As the censors lost control of the presses, so Archbishop Laud's church ceased to dominate the nation's religious practices. To a royalist conforming member of the Church of England like Edward Hyde, these years were disturbing indeed:

And from this time the licence of preaching and printing increased to that degree that all pulpits were freely delivered to the schismatical and silenced preachers, who 'til then had lurked in corners or lived in New England.<sup>1</sup>

Hyde's belief that much of England's ferment could be blamed on New England's renegade preachers was common enough. The leading Presbyterian minister Robert Baillie complained in 1645 that congregational thinking was gaining dangerous influence in the upper reaches of English society, having until recently been restricted to Holland, some of the London churches, and, most importantly, New England.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence of New England's unenviable reputation appears in a range of sources. In addition to the predictable attacks by religious opponents, settlers in the northern colonies ran the full gamut of criticism from being the butt of jokes to being accused- often by those who might have been considered likely allies- of deserting England in its time of need. At one extreme, New Englanders sometimes found that they were not taken quite as seriously as they would have liked. Settlers who came to Massachusetts on the *Mary Rose* in 1640 reported that they had been the subject of irreverent jeers from sailors: later, when some colonists visited the ship to buy goods the crew expressed surprise. Surely, the sailors argued, the locals "could not want anything, they

1 Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and the Civil Wars in England*, W.D. Macray ed., (1888), I: 269.

2 Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time*, (1645), 59.

were full of the spirit."<sup>1</sup> Some of the attitudes toward New England expressed by English religious activists demonstrate an incredulity which was different only in degree. If Anglicans and Presbyterians thought them dangerously radical, the sectarian radicals could not understand why the colonists stayed in New England when there was reforming work to be done at home. A significant body of opinion throughout English society believed that the final victory over the forces of Anti-Christ was imminent, and the decision of distinguished New England clergy to remain in the American wilderness was met with suspicion and incomprehension.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of such attitudes, some of England's Parliamentary leaders had considerable respect for the Bay clergy in the early 1640s. In 1643 a group of prominent English figures asked leading New England ministers to return home and assist in the impending reorganisation of the Church. The request was signed by five peers and thirty-four others, most of whom were MPs. Many of these men had been involved in the planning and financing of colonial enterprises since the 1620s, and had also been patrons and protectors of a number of ministers, some of whom had migrated. In addition, they were shortly to have prominent roles to play in successive interregnum governments, and in particular the colonial committees of Parliament and the Council of State.<sup>3</sup>

1 Massachusetts leaders soon afterward expressed themselves thoroughly vindicated: the Mary Rose was sunk in harbour in July 1640 by an accidental (but no doubt divinely arranged) gunpowder explosion. See John Endecott to John Winthrop, 28 July 1640, in *Winthrop Papers* IV: 270-1.

2 For a discussion of English theologians' attitudes toward New England, see Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory*, (1984), Chapter 8.

3 The signature list included half of the original eighteen members of the Earl of Warwick's colonial commission, which will be considered in the next chapter. See Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts Bay*, 100-101.

The negative reaction of the colonists to this appeal set the tone for a gradual alienation. John Cotton, Thomas Hooker and John Davenport were asked to attend the Westminster Assembly, which was charged with devising a form of government for the church which allowed cooperation with reformed churches in Scotland and elsewhere, as well as clearing all "false calumnies and aspersions" from church doctrine.<sup>1</sup> None of the ministers was enthusiastic: Hooker flatly refused to cross the Atlantic to join what he perceived as a minority faction in London, Davenport made no attempt to change the initial refusal of his congregation, and Cotton took his regular seat on the fence, declaring himself reluctant to make the journey alone while acknowledging the righteousness of the cause.<sup>2</sup>

With hindsight at least, the three ministers' reluctance to heed the call was probably wise. The often negative experiences of those clerics who travelled to England as agents in the 1640s indicate that Cotton, Davenport and Hooker might have had a rough reception. Thomas Weld and Hugh Peter were already in England when the appeal went out to Cotton and his colleagues. Both agents drew serious criticism from English polemicists, although for rather different reasons. Peter rapidly became distracted from his agency by his work as an army chaplain, and stopped working for Massachusetts long before his commission was officially recalled in 1645. Nonetheless, his actions continued to be interpreted as representing the practice of religious affairs in Bay Colony. Weld's contribution to the agency took the form of pamphlets defending the colonial churches from charges of intolerance, but his work served largely to reinforce

1 See Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord*, (1985), 69.

2 See Winthrop, *Journal* II: 71-2. There is evidence that Hooker did try to influence the Assembly in writing: see Sargent Bush, "Thomas Hooker and the Westminster Assembly" *WMQ* 29 (1972): 291-300.



the views of critics.

Neither agent had any hesitation in throwing himself wholeheartedly into English controversies. Peter was sometimes an embarrassment to his new colleagues in Parliament's army as well as to his colony, and this contributed further to his being an easy target for opponents. Some of the stories which abounded of Peter's over-zealous pursuit of the reformation reveal disapproval of the minister's conduct on the part of his superiors. In 1649 Presbyterian pamphleteer Clement Walker described Peter's attempt to arrest Presbyterian minister Edmund Calamy. According to the admittedly hostile source, Peter believed that his name alone would frighten the ministers who were meeting at Calamy's house, and went on to spend the evening "vapouring and canting religion and nonsense" to the assembled divines. Calamy subsequently discovered that Peter had acted without any orders from his military commanders.<sup>1</sup> Neither did Peter mellow with age. In the last months of the Protectorate, William Lockhart informed Secretary of State Thurloe of Peter's arrival in Dunkirk. Lockhart was clearly exasperated by his new chaplain, writing that "if it were possible to get him to mind preaching, and to forbear the troubling of himself with other things, he would certainly prove a very fit minister for soldiers."<sup>2</sup>

Presbyterians lined up to condemn Peter, sometimes explicitly as a New Englander, and sometimes as a typical believer in congregational church government. The chief aim of this onslaught was to demonstrate that Peter and his fellow New Englanders were hypocrites, who made a great show of their piety while making full use of their new-found positions of power- on either side of the Atlantic- to achieve worldly prosperity. Robert Baillie, Scottish Presbyterian and delegate to the Westminster

1 Theodorus Verax [pseud. Clement Walker] *Anarchie Anglicana or The History of Independency*, (1649), 67.

2 Thurloe State Papers VI: 223.

Assembly, wrote in the spring of 1644 that Peter's "malapert rashness" would be "very dangerous to this Church and State." William Prynne embarked on some manuscript research in 1645 and revealed to the world the submission Peter made to the Bishop of London on 17 August 1627. At that time, Peter had been obliged, in the face of episcopal censure, to describe the Church of England as "the most glorious and flourishing Church this day under the sun": Prynne was keen to contrast this with the preacher's more recent stance.<sup>1</sup>

Peter's most persistent critic was Thomas Edwards, who listed the sins and ill deeds of every congregationalist and radical he could find in his three-part work *Gangraena*. Peter, in Edwards' words, was the "Solicitor General for the Sectaries", a man who refused to return to New England even though he was required so to do by the doctrines of his own church, and who had profited personally from money ostensibly raised to send poor children to New England and from the confiscation of Archbishop Laud's library.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Weld kept a lower profile than his fellow agent. Nonetheless, he inadvertently ensured that the controversy over the Antinomian crisis of 1637-38 became an issue in England six years later. The dispute between Anne Hutchinson's supporters and most of the Massachusetts leadership was, at least in the eyes of the colony elite, the most serious threat to civil order faced in the early years of settlement. The actual risk to the Bay from the Antinomians may have been exaggerated, with men like John Winthrop reacting less to the reality of the Hutchinson's beliefs than to older

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1 See Baillie to William Spang, 12 April 1644, in Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, David Laing, ed., 3 vols. (1841-1842), II: 165; Prynne, *A Fresh Discovery of some Prodigious New Wandring-Blasing-Stars and Firebrands*, (1645), 33.

2 Edwards, *Gangraena*, (1646), I: 98-100.

European stereotypes of religious sectarians.<sup>1</sup> In any case, by the mid-1640s the dispute was far from the most pressing concern in the debates over the future of English church policy, and should have been largely forgotten.

In 1644, however, a pamphlet relating details of the crisis and of Hutchinson's trial appeared anonymously in London: authorship is generally credited to the elder John Winthrop.<sup>2</sup> Exactly how it came to be published is unclear, but Weld took it upon himself to add a preface and reissue the text. Weld expressed himself reluctant to revive the story on the grounds that many of those involved had since repented their heresies, but in fact he took every opportunity to assert the topicality of the work. The Antinomians had flourished in New England because they encouraged people to live lazily, safe in the belief that they would ultimately be saved no matter how they sinned in the meantime. It was for this reason, argued the agent, that "this kind of doctrine takes so well here in London".<sup>3</sup>

In drawing parallels between religious controversies in Massachusetts and England, Weld was setting up New England Congregationalism as a model for the treatment of sectarian radicals. Such a strategy was potentially harmful because it gave the colony's enemies a clear target. Worse still, it was likely to alienate some potential friends, because a number of prominent characters in the Antinomian crisis were well-known figures in the transatlantic religious community by the

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1 See Stephen Foster, "New England and the Challenge of Heresy, 1630-1660: The Puritan Crisis in Transatlantic Perspective." *WMQ* 38 (1981): 624-660.

2 *Antinomians and Familists Condemned by the Synod of Elders in New-England*, (1644).

3 Weld's re-issue of the pamphlet included a new title but no alteration to the main text. See *A Short Story of the Rise, reign and ruine of the Antinomians, Familists and Libertines*, (1644) in David Hall, ed. *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, (2nd edn 1990), 204.

time *A Short Story* was published.

All three of the ministers- Cotton, Hooker and Davenport- who were the subject of the appeal by England's leaders in 1643 were mentioned either in Winthrop's text or in Weld's preface. John Cotton had been much embarrassed by the whole Antinomian affair, having been the only minister in the colony approved of by Anne Hutchinson. Although the clergy always denied that Cotton's preaching differed from that of his colleagues, Cotton's association with Hutchinson did lead to doubts about his integrity. Thomas Hooker had been moderator of the court which investigated the beliefs of the dissidents, while John Davenport, mentioned only briefly in Winthrop's text, was prominent in the interrogation of Anne Hutchinson prior to her banishment.<sup>1</sup> Also notable among Hutchinson's opponents was Hugh Peter, who became even more open to charges of inconstancy as the 1640s progressed and he moved to being a vocal tolerationist.<sup>2</sup>

Weld's publication of *A Short Story*, intended as a justification of the Bay Colony's actions against radical sectarians, only served to give ammunition to the colony's critics. In particular, it became part of a growing volume of evidence of Massachusetts intolerance, soon to be added to by Rhode Island agents Williams and Gorton. Weld did not anticipate that the toleration question would become an increasingly important aspect of the divisions between the various factions which made up the English church reform movement.

Despite its dangers, Weld's attempt to draw parallels between events in England and the colonies became a common tactic of agents and English commentators alike. New England had more than a decade of experience in maintaining the sort of church government and social

1 See Winthrop, *A Short Story*, 269-71 (Cotton), 212 (Hooker), 305 (Davenport).

2 See Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma*, 183.



organisation which was at the centre of much debate in England, and it was inevitable that supporters and detractors would both try to draw conclusions from this. Competing agents in particular tried to couch their appeals in terms of the likely impact on England if one or another colonial faction or interest should prevail.

Some such warnings bordered on the apocalyptic. Edward Winslow sketched what he saw as the logical conclusion of the Gortonists' criticism of the Bay Colony magistrates, and is worth quoting as an example of the sort of vituperation piled upon the Shawomet settlers. Gorton, Winslow claimed, believed that the office of civil magistrate was not necessary, and that justice should be administered by men with powers common to the rest of their brethren: to be part of Christ's brotherhood was more important than any civil office. It was therefore obvious to Winslow that

if ministration of justice and judgement belongs to no officer, but to a man as a Brother, then to every Brother, and if to every Brother, whether rich or poor, ignorant or learned, then every Christian in a Commonwealth must be King, and Judge, and Sheriff, and Captain, and Parliament man, and Ruler, and that not only in New-England, but in Old, and not only in Old, but in all the Christian world; down with all Officers from their rule, and set up every Brother for to Rule, which the godly-wise may easily discern to the establishment of all confusion, and the setting up of Anarchy worse than the greatest Tyranny.<sup>1</sup>

Winslow's vision of chaos raised many issues to which he repeatedly turned in his polemical work. The prospect that the poor and ignorant would soon consider themselves on a par with the more traditional ruling elite was as abhorrent to many in England as it was to Winslow.

If Winslow saw Massachusetts dissidents bringing anarchy to England, other agents viewed the Bay Colony's own social and political practices as a more serious danger to the home country. William Vassall condemned the colony's treatment of the Remonstrants in his 1647

1 Winslow, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, 44.

pamphlet, and hoped that "as from New England came Independencie of churches hither, which hath spread over all parts here; that from thence also (in time) arbitrary government in the Commonwealth may not come hither." In a simultaneous attack on English Congregationalists, Vassall observed that "Independents are all of a piece, for subtlety, designs, fallacies, both in New England and in Old."<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally, pamphleteers tried to portray the flow of anarchy and disorder as running in the opposite direction. New England's radicals, it was argued, were fermenting the sort of trouble familiar to the home country during the 1640s, but previously unknown in the colonies. This tactic was of course a direct and useful counter to those who claimed that the colonies as a whole were the original source of religious controversy in England. Edward Winslow complained that the Remonstrants had spread news of their activities throughout the neighbouring colonies, to the Dutch settlements, and even to the southern and island plantations. The Governor of Bermuda was apparently convinced that New England would soon be "altogether by the ears as well as England."<sup>2</sup>

Such explicit attempts to link events in England and the colonies do not indicate any sense of separation on the part of agents. Indeed, it was because they saw the English world as a single entity that they were able to identify issues on either side of the Atlantic which they believed would convince their audience.

One aspect of the transatlantic religious debate which intimately concerned agents was the toleration question. Rhode Island was one of the few branches of English society operating on the principle of religious toleration in the 1640s, and its agents were vocal proponents of the idea. At the same time, Massachusetts agents used the anarchic reputation of the Narragansett

1 Child, *New Englands Jonas*, 117, 120.

2 Winslow, *New Englands Salamander*, 116.

settlements to argue against toleration.

Roger Williams made an early contribution to the argument over toleration in 1644 and continued to publish material on this issue during his second mission in 1651-53. Williams' tolerationist pamphlet *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* condemned the use of civil power in matters of religion, and began a lengthy debate with John Cotton.<sup>1</sup> Samuel Gorton complained that Massachusetts was banishing and persecuting those "differing from them in point of doctrine."<sup>2</sup> Williams' co-agent John Clarke wrote in 1652 that "no servant of Jesus hath any authority from him to force upon others either the faith or order of the Gospel of Christ." Clarke promised to supply eight arguments against "persecution for case of conscience."<sup>3</sup> All three agents based their petitions and much of their pamphleteering on the claim that they had been persecuted by Massachusetts for their beliefs rather than any threat they may have posed to public order.

As advocates of religious toleration, Williams and Gorton were very much in a minority in the mid-1640s, although Clarke was received more favourably by the Commonwealth. Recent scholarship has revealed that it is a considerable oversimplification to argue that toleration was the major dividing issue between the two main church groups in 1640s England. It has often been assumed that while Presbyterians were undoubtedly opposed to a large scale toleration of sects and factions, English Congregationalists were more inclined to favour toleration. Some English leaders did become convinced of the need for toleration in the later 1640s, but their motives often owed more to a pragmatic assessment of the military recruitment needs of the Parliamentary armies

1 *The Bloudy Tenent* and its sequel, *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody*, are printed in Williams, *Writings*, II, III.

2 Gorton, *Simplicities Defence*, 18

3 Clarke, *Ill Newes from New-England*, 26.

than any theological interest.<sup>1</sup>

Rhode Island agents discovered that as tolerationists they stood outside the mainstream of England's theological debates in the mid-1640s, and that they were likely to draw criticism from either of the two most significant parties. The Presbyterian Robert Baillie wrote in June 1644 that Williams was advocating "a singular Independency, denying any true church in the world". Notably, though, Baillie observed that Williams' opinions were also causing a "great and bitter schism" in the ranks of the Independents.<sup>2</sup> Williams himself complained that English Independents had much the same view of using civil power to enforce religious conformity as had the Massachusetts churches, and indeed rivalled Presbyterians in this matter.<sup>3</sup> Independents and Presbyterians alike ordered Williams' tracts to be burned in 1644. Samuel Gorton spent part of his time in London preaching to a radical congregation in the Coleman Street area, and was active enough to be investigated by a Parliamentary commission in 1648: the complaints against him which led to the hearing came from supposedly tolerationist Independents.<sup>4</sup> Even John Clarke was well outside the mainstream English church during the Commonwealth and Protectorate, preaching to Baptist congregations and possibly becoming implicated in the

1 Avihu Zakai argues against the traditional view that Independents advanced the cause of toleration from as early as 1643. See Zakai, "Religious Toleration and its Enemies", *Albion* 21 (1989): 1-33; also "Orthodoxy in England and New England: Puritans and the Issue of Religious Toleration, 1640-1650." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 135 (1991): 401-441.

2 "Publick Letter" 7 June 1644, Baillie *Letters* II: 190.

3 Williams, *Writings*, III: 350.

4 See Gorton to Nathaniel Morton, 30 June 1669, in Peter Force, *Tracts*, IV: 14-15.



activities of the Fifth Monarchists.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important observations that can be made about Rhode Island agents' religious activities is that it provoked very little adverse comment about the colony, and certainly nothing compared to the criticism attracted by the Bay colony's representatives. There are a number of reasons for this, although most stem from the general ignorance of English commentators regarding the number and variety of political and ecclesiastical settlements in New England. Rhode Islanders' colonial connections were rarely made explicit, while it was all too obvious where the Bay Colony agents came from. Scottish theologian Samuel Rutherford disagreed with Williams' view of the division between civil and ecclesiastical powers, but seemed to have little awareness of the religious practices of Rhode Island: he made no reference to Williams' colonial career other than to condemn what he called the agent's "heathenish or American peace".<sup>2</sup> Even when Williams' colonial background was explicitly described, Rhode Island was not held up to the sort of criticism Massachusetts suffered. In common with most writers, Robert Baillie over-simplified the New England situation. He noted Williams' attempt to make contact with the Indians but acknowledged no distinctions within the ranks of the colonies and contented himself with characterising the low level of church membership across New England as a "grievous absurdity".<sup>3</sup>

Most Presbyterian commentators saw the disruption within the ranks of the New England colonies as a symptom of the inherent problems with the Congregational church concept. This meant that while Rhode Islanders like

1 See Richard Greaves, "A Colonial Fifth Monarchist? John Clarke of Rhode Island" *Rhode Island History* 40 (1981): 40-47. A more detailed discussion of Clarke's activities follows below.

2 Rutherford, *A Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience*, (1649), 321, 325, 333.

3 Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time*, 60.

Williams and Gorton were being condemned in England for their radicalism, Massachusetts did not get any credit for taking steps against them. Only occasionally did the Bay Colony meet the approval of the critics of Independency. Samuel Rutherford gave backhanded praise to Massachusetts for the hard-line taken by the colony magistrates against the Antinomians, claiming that the Bay authorities were learning from experience to move toward Presbyterian methods and ideas.<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, England's tendency to treat all New England as one entity owes something to the success of the Bay Colony's own propaganda. The term 'New England' changed in its everyday meaning as the seventeenth century progressed. Originally a simple geographic label, with the great migration of the 1630s it became synonymous with the Massachusetts settlement. Such usage fitted well with the professed intention of the migrants to establish a new, reformed English society. Supporters of Massachusetts continued to use the term in this sense, because it encouraged the impression that the Bay Colony and its laws and customs were uniformly accepted across the region. With the formation of the Confederation of the United Colonies of New England in 1643, 'New England' was reinforced as a generic term for the orthodox settlements. Rhode Islanders were aware of the tendency of English commentators to oversimplify the region's character: John Clarke offered a short geography lesson at the start of his 1652 pamphlet, and encouraged his readers to think of Rhode Island as separate from their usual idea of New England.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1640s, however, the activities of Rhode Island's agents were used to incriminate Independency in general, and Massachusetts was widely held to be the key source of Independent agitators. The radical heretics of

1 Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist*, (1648), 177.

2 Clarke, *Ill Newes from New-England*, 22-23.

Rhode Island were held up as a symptom of the failure of the Bay Colony's Congregationalist experiment, rather than as a separate threat. When Samuel Gorton was taken before the above-mentioned Parliamentary committee to answer charges that he had preached without authority, the account of his several punishments at the hands of Massachusetts was clearly available to the court. The only conclusion drawn by the Presbyterian who reported the story, however, was that Gorton's "impious and audacious blasphemies" were merely a taste of what would happen if Independents came to power in England.<sup>1</sup> The situation was almost one in which any religious publicity was good for Rhode Island, and bad for Massachusetts.

The religious activities and reputations of New Englanders aroused most controversy in the 1640s, and played a much reduced part in the lives of agents and other colonials in later years. Religious controversies did not cease to exist by any means, but there were fewer agents in England, and those who did serve made less of a contribution to pamphleteering than had previously been the case. In addition, religious activists had new concerns: they had to come to terms with a war against their co-religionists the Dutch in 1652, and later saw the Cromwellian revival of the older conflict with Catholic Spain.

Nonetheless, there were still occasions when New Englanders were not allowed to forget their colonial connections or their religious activities. In particular, the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660 threatened a more serious purge of the unorthodox than had been the case with any previous change of regime. Two agents- John Clarke and John Leveret- were in England when Charles II was crowned, and both had to take steps to distance themselves from the events of the previous decade and avoid falling foul of the new government. The two cases

<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, *Hinc Illae Lachrymae, or the Impietie of Impunitie*, (1648), 4.

are rather different, because Leveret had no intention of continuing as agent, while Clarke not only had to avoid censure but also retain his status as Rhode Island's representative. Clarke's case is therefore worth considering in some depth.

Analysis of John Clarke's English career would be much simpler if he had a less common name, and there are relatively few instances in which he can be identified with absolute certainty. He usually made his Rhode Island connection explicit when writing tracts and in correspondence, but attempts to distinguish him from namesakes in such documents as English church membership records is inevitably an inexact science.

One thing which Clarke certainly did after the Restoration was publish a tract entitled *The Plotters Unmasked, Murderers No Saints*. This was a vehement condemnation of Thomas Venner's Fifth Monarchist uprising, and was published soon after the failure of that insurrection in January 1661. Within weeks, Clarke made his first petition for a Rhode Island charter, and it is hard to escape the conclusion that the pamphlet was intended to establish his loyalty to the new regime and thus create a favourable reception for the petition.

Clarke was convinced that he had to repudiate the rebels and provide testimony to his own law-abiding nature for two reasons, both familiar to those agents who had been caught up in the religious debates of fifteen years before. First, Clarke was suspected of involvement in the Fifth Monarchy movement, and was certainly a well known radical Baptist. Second, and in a rather indirect manner, his New England origins cast him in a dubious light.

The evidence that Rhode Island's John Clarke was an active Fifth Monarchist is inconclusive, although there are sufficient circumstantial clues to make a reasonable case. Clarke's writings and correspondence in the 1650s reveal a man with strong millenarian beliefs. In particular, his letters to Colonel Robert Bennett in 1655



and 1658 make repeated reference to themes which appear regularly in millenarian work. Clarke urged Bennett to "wield the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit" and "march courageously after that Captain who, ere long, will gloriously appear to be the Lord of hosts and the Prince of kings."<sup>1</sup>

As the editor of these letters notes, there was at least one other radical called John Clarke in London the later 1650s, and it may have been this man who was imprisoned in 1658 following a raid on a gathering in Swan Alley, Coleman Street. Rhode Island's Clarke made no mention later of spending six months in jail while in England. It is true, however, that the account of the 1658 trial has various parallels with the colonist's own experiences while on trial in Massachusetts seven years previously. In both cases the defendant quoted the Bible extensively, had to have his hat forcibly removed, and launched a bold attack on the validity of the government by which he was being tried.<sup>2</sup>

Whether the Rhode Island agent was at the heart of London's Fifth Monarchy agitation, or held a more academic millenarianism, he was not involved in Venner's 1661 revolt. Clarke was arrested and briefly detained in the aftermath of the uprising, but so were numerous other Baptists, Quakers and Congregationalists.<sup>3</sup> His religious activities in the previous decade, and in particular his preaching to the Baptist congregation at Worchester House, would have been sufficient to have him arrested in 1661. However noticeable it was, though, Clarke's behaviour did not come close to the sort of subversion practised by Thomas Venner. What Clarke did share with

1 B.R. White, ed. "Early Baptist Letters", *Baptist Quarterly*, 27 (1977-78): 142-149. Quotation from Clarke to Bennett, 6 August 1655, 144.

2 See *A Narrative...of John Canne....* (1658); Clarke's account of his Massachusetts experience is in his *Ill Newes from New-England*, 27-40.

3 See Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, (1972), 199.

former Massachusetts settler Venner was a New England connection, and this, when combined with the taint of religious radicalism, persuaded Clarke that he had to prove his loyalty. Venner spoke of his years in New England during his trial in mid-January 1661, creating just the sort of publicity that agents and colonies alike would have rather avoided.<sup>1</sup>

Part of the reason for doubting Clarke's involvement with the Fifth Monarchists is his rapid move to petition the Crown for a colony charter in the aftermath of Venner's uprising: it has been argued that a known radical would have been forced to keep a low profile for a time.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Clarke's New England background made it imperative that he rapidly demonstrate that he was in London as an agent, and remove all suspicion that he was there as an insurrectionist. While Venner would have been no more tolerated in the colonies than he was in England, Charles II nonetheless suspected that New England was still the potential source of rebellion that it had been to his father. Clarke had neither the orders nor the resources to make a serious bid for a charter early in 1661, but by lodging an initial petition he could at least make it clear that he was in England for a good reason, and register his intention to further represent Rhode Island.

Massachusetts provides one final example of the effect of religious activities on transatlantic relationships and the careers of agents. Simon Bradstreet and John Norton had a complicated relationship with their colony, as has been noted, but they also faced personal attacks in England over their attitudes to Quakers in the colonies. In addition the colony itself was the subject of Quaker

1 Venner was executed on 19 January 1661 after a two day trial. See Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy" *WMQ* 32 (1975), 257.

2 This is the view of W.H. Allison in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

criticism.<sup>1</sup>

The Massachusetts leadership was united in its condemnation of the Quaker agitators who began arriving in the colony in the later sixteen-fifties. Although there were clear divisions between and among the Magistrates and Deputies over the 1662 mission to England, it should not be assumed that the moderate faction which organised the dispatch of the agents was any more tolerant of radical sectarianism. The colonial leadership may have differed in the best approach to securing English support and avoiding English interference, but a wish to be on cooperative terms with the home country should not be equated with any anachronistic idea of political or religious liberalism.

Quakers began their barrage of criticism of Massachusetts well before the Restoration, and a considerable volume of evidence was available in England by the time of the Bradstreet-Norton mission. One of the earliest major accounts was published by Francis Howgill in 1659, in which the experiences of Quakers in New Netherland and Plymouth as well as in Massachusetts were described. Howgill's account was supported soon after by Humphrey Norton, who compiled his account while returning to England. A large part of Norton's evidence was gathered from New Netherland, and he clearly aimed to stir nationalist feelings when he stressed that Englishmen were suffering there, quite apart from the fact that they were also Quakers. Rhode Island, Norton concluded, was the only place of refuge on the continent, and the "habitation of the hunted-Christ."<sup>2</sup>

Massachusetts was undoubtedly guilty of most, if not all, of the atrocities claimed by the Quakers, and the

1 For a recent study of Quaker agitation in the Bay Colony, see Carla Pestana, "The City upon a Hill under Siege: The Puritan Perception of the Quaker Threat to Massachusetts Bay, 1656-1661" *NEQ* 56 (1983): 323-353.

2 See Howgill, *The Popish Inquisition Newly Erected in New-England*, (1659); Norton, *New Englands Ensigne*, (1659), 19, 14.



ferocity of the Bay Colony's actions indicates a deep fear of the potential impact of the new sect. Nor did the colony leadership stop at using the full severity of their laws against the Quakers. As in the case of the Gortonists early in the previous decade, Massachusetts recognised that there was a propaganda battle to be fought if others were to be 'saved' from the influence of the radicals. Earlier dissidents had been exiled in an attempt to silence them, but the Bay leadership had more tools at its disposal by 1659, one of the more potent being the printing press at Cambridge.

The most widely circulated anti-Quaker tract to be printed in New England was John Norton's *The Heart of N-England Rent*. Norton's work, which was later reprinted in London, was a forceful defence of the Bay Colony's actions, and also a bitter condemnation of what the author saw as a decline in the moral fabric of the colony: the subtitle of the work condemned the "blasphemies of the present generation." Norton asked "whether the keepers of a vineyard having set up an hedge, may not maintain it against the wild beasts of the field, when breaking of it down?" He also drew on perceived historical parallels to cast the Bay Colony as the defenders of Christendom. The Gnostics of the early church, wrote Norton, had been revealed as false Apostles despite the persuasiveness of their claims to be in fellowship with Christ, and the same would in time be true of the Quakers.<sup>1</sup>

Norton's role in the fight against the Quakers was not restricted to pamphleteering, and he rapidly gained a reputation as a leading persecutor of the sect. By the time of the 1662 mission, Norton's name had appeared in a number of Quaker tracts, as had that of his fellow agent Simon Bradstreet. Norton had been the chief interrogator of Christopher Holder and John Copeland in 1657; worse, he had refused to censure the Boston jailer for cruelty

<sup>1</sup> Norton, *The Heart of N-England Rent*, London edn (1660), 85, 87.



toward the Quaker William Brend, despite complaints from some members of Norton's own church. The same account levelled particular criticism at magistrate Bradstreet, Governor John Endecott and Deputy-Governor Richard Bellingham.<sup>1</sup> Other critics attacked Norton's writings and questioned his claim that Massachusetts was a bastion against heresy. Isaac Penington, son of one of the leading London Aldermen of the interregnum, wrote detailed answers to various papers including Norton's in 1660. While Penington did not doubt the honest intentions of many who emigrated, he noted that many more had remained in England to "bear their testimony for God and his truth by suffering." Perhaps the Bay Colony had not really had "sufficient warrant from God to transplant."<sup>2</sup>

Massachusetts may have hoped that such criticism of individuals and the colony alike would meet with little favour in England at the turn of the decade. Even if the short-lived governments of 1659-60 had been aware of every claim in every Quaker pamphlet, they had higher priorities than the enforcement of toleration in New England. Later, whatever the restored monarchy may have thought of the Bay Colony, colonial leaders can be forgiven for assuming that it would surely think less of the Quakers. Initial contact between Boston and London after the Restoration made no apology for actions against the Quakers. This may have been simple arrogance on the part of Governor Endecott, or it may be that the Bay genuinely believed it would be congratulated for holding the line against the radicals.

Quaker propaganda, allied to the fact that most of the Bay leadership had been involved in measures against the sect, made it very difficult for Massachusetts to send an agent in 1662 who was not vulnerable to accusations of intolerance. Evidence from Quakers added

1 Howgill, *Popish Inquisition*, 33, 37, 62.

2 Penington, *An Examination of the Grounds and Causes...*, (1660), 50-70 (quotation: 51).

to the general feeling that the Bay Colony's behaviour was unacceptable, and that its divergence from England during the previous three decades had become too great to be ignored.

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Questions of faith and ecclesiastical policy occupied the English wherever they settled in the mid-seventeenth century, and agents inevitably faced a barrage of informed criticism. There was one related issue, however, which promised to give agents and other colonials a near-monopoly on available information. Questions about Indians allowed agents to employ the full weight of their American experiences. This was an area in which few Englishmen had first-hand knowledge, and was therefore a convenient battleground between agents themselves. In the 1640s especially, Massachusetts and Rhode Island agents tried to take advantage of the issue for their own ends.

Relations between colonists and Indians had been a major concern of the New England settlers in their first decade in America, and it was soon to be prominent in a transatlantic context also. In particular, the progress- or lack thereof- in the drive to convert Indians to Christianity was a prime concern of some English commentators and sponsors of the colonies. Most agents serving in the 1640s had to deal directly or indirectly with the relationship between colonists and native Americans in the course of their missions. New England Indians were used for many purposes by the colonists, from providers of food in hard winters to the subjects of tales told to frighten children. They also, sometimes willingly, represented part of the case put forward by agents. Some English observers used conversion as a yardstick for colonial success, forcing agents to defend their colonies' record in that field. Agents themselves used stories about Indians for various purposes: Massachusetts agents used the issue to seek charitable

contributions and make a case for the military expansion of Bay Colony, while Rhode Islanders capitalised on Boston's poor evangelical record and enlisted Indians as supporters in their claims against Massachusetts' expansionism. While none of these manoeuvres helped the Indians in the long term, the activities of Rhode Island agents did help to postpone the complete English conquest of southern New England.

Massachusetts agents Thomas Weld and Hugh Peter first raised the Indian question in *New Englands First Fruits*, published in 1643. The pamphlet painted a glowing picture of the colonists' efforts to bring the light of civilisation to the Indians, who were previously in "hellish darkness". Less emphasis was given to religious questions, though, than to the portrayal of English actions towards the Indians: the natives had welcomed the English, stated the agents, and never ceased to be impressed by the civilised behaviour of the settlers, who were careful to buy all land fairly and accord the Indians equal rights before the courts.<sup>1</sup>

The rest of the agents' pamphlet was devoted to an account of the first years of the college at Cambridge, Massachusetts, which they argued showed considerable promise in the training of ministers but lacked funds for proper teaching. Converting Indians and educating would-be ministers were actually rather low in the scale of priorities adopted in the Bay Colony, but naturally enough the agents picked out two issues which could appeal to wealthy English sympathisers. The success enjoyed by Weld and Peter in raising money for these causes in the earlier parts of their mission is testimony to their perceptive targeting.

In their discussion of the Indian question, Weld and Peter inadvertently began a debate which they had cause later to regret. Peter in particular became so bitterly disappointed by the whole business that he labelled

1 Weld, *New Englands First Fruits*, (1643), 8.

Indian conversion "a plain cheat".<sup>1</sup> More important than the disillusionment of individuals, however, was the way in which relations between Massachusetts and the Indians provided a ready means of attack for opponents of the Bay Colony and an on-going issue to be faced by later Massachusetts agents. Edward Winslow found himself on the defensive in the later 1640s and had to devote considerable effort to the promotion of the Bay Colony's evangelical image.

Roger Williams made a rather different use of the Indian question during his first mission in 1643. Williams had been forced to spend some time with the Indians when he was banished from Massachusetts in 1636: it was mid-winter and the Narragansett tribe offered him shelter until he was able to establish his new settlement at Providence. His experiences enabled him to make an informed attack on the image of the Indians put forward by Weld and Peter.

In *New Englands First Fruits*, Weld had made much of the difficulties facing the colonists in the conversion of Indians. The Indians had to be educated and enlightened from scratch, having never had any contact with English settlers before. In addition, Weld stressed that the language barrier was daunting. Both sides found language-learning difficult, Weld admitted, but the task was particularly hard for the English, faced as they were with the many Indian dialects spoken in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Weld surely believed that he was on solid ground here. The language problem had been identified from the early days of colonisation as a barrier to meaningful discussion with Indians on any topic other than the most routine. In the beginning, the issue had been approached with some confidence, and settlers claimed "we purpose to learn their language as soon as we can, which will be a

1 Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan*, 180.

2 Weld, *New Englands First Fruits*, 1.



means to do them good."<sup>1</sup> However, one writer complained that while it may have been easy enough to communicate in terms of trade and the like,

how shall a man express unto them things merely spiritual, which have no affinity with sense, unless we were thoroughly acquainted with their language, and they with ours?"<sup>2</sup>

When Weld added his voice to the issue, he simply extended the familiar argument that Indian languages would take time to learn, and that conversion would necessarily have to be delayed.

Not so, argued Williams. The Rhode Islander arrived in England shortly after *New Englands First Fruits* was published and was soon in print himself. A *Key into the Language of America* contains the first of several statements by Williams on the question of Indian conversion and reveals some important differences between his approach and that of the Bay Colony. First, Williams knew that it was possible to communicate with different Indian groups. He did not explicitly criticise Weld's pamphlet, and actually acknowledged the work of his "worthy countrymen...(of late in print)". Nonetheless, Williams did take pains to emphasise at the very beginning of his *Key*, that Indian

dialects do exceedingly differ; yet not so, but...a man may, by this help, converse with thousands of natives all over the country: and by such converse it may please the Father of Mercies to spread civility, (and in His own most holy season) Christianity...<sup>3</sup>

Although Williams was promoting his own guide to Indian languages as a means of overcoming problems, he also made it clear that his own knowledge had not come from books, but from regular contact with the Indians. The difficulties suggested by the Massachusetts agents

1 *New Englands Plantation*, 13, in *Force, Tracts*, I.

2 *A Planters Plea*, 29, in *Force, Tracts*, II.

3 Williams, *Writings*, I: 80.

stemmed in large part from an almost total lack of effort on the part of the Bay clergy, rather than any real difficulties in communication or lack of resources. Williams went on to claim that he could easily have persuaded all the Indians he knew to observe the Sabbath, but that such superficial observation of Christian doctrine did not constitute true conversion.<sup>1</sup> The logical conclusion of Williams' arguments was unlikely to please the orthodox on either side of the Atlantic. Later, in his *Christenings make not Christians*, Williams argued that America was not alone in lying "dead in sin and trespasses", and that the English had work to do reforming in their own country before they spread the gospel to the Indian.<sup>2</sup>

When *Christenings* reached the press in 1645, Williams was already involved in England's religious debates, and his ideas about conversion served to further tie him to the radical fringe. To much of Williams' audience, the chief impact of his early work was to give the impression that Massachusetts was neglecting one of its stated reasons for existence. Williams may have abstained from conversion because of theological qualms, but the fact remained that he had made sufficient contact with the Indians to reach the point where conversion was technically feasible. It was clear from Williams' account that the Bay Colony had not even made that degree of effort to bring the Gospel to the Indians. This, despite the colony having been established in America for a dozen years under a charter which stated explicitly that conversion of the Indians was "the principal end of this plantation."<sup>3</sup>

Later Rhode Island agents also turned the Indians into a political weapon for use against Massachusetts.

1 Williams, *Writings*, I: 220.

2 Williams, *Writings*, VI: 37.

3 For the Charter, see *English Historical Documents*, IX: 82.

Usually, their approach was more direct than that of Williams, but just as carefully planned. If Williams endeavoured to learn about Indian culture and explore religious beliefs, some of his fellow colonists came to rely on more practical aspects of Indian life. The most elaborate instance of Indian involvement in the affairs of an agent did not involve conversion, but rather represents a desperate attempt by two of New England's persecuted communities to hold back a common enemy. Samuel Gorton, defending his settlement of religious refugees at Shawomet, took the radical step of enlisting Indian support in his battle with Massachusetts. Gorton persuaded three of the Narragansett leaders to pledge their loyalty to Charles I in 1644. Gorton's reasons for doing this were various. The move mirrored the Bay Colony's action in persuading William Arnold's faction in the town of Providence to align itself with the United Colonies. More importantly, in a period when most factions in England were still paying careful lip-service to the idea that Charles was a good king with evil counsellors, Massachusetts could not readily belittle the sachems' oath of allegiance.

The Narragansett tribe and Gorton's followers had much in common by 1644. Both feared being hounded off their lands by Massachusetts, which had already used military force against both groups. Gorton and his followers sought shelter with the Narragansett following the raid on Shawomet by a troop of Bay militia and the subsequent trial and imprisonment of the Gortonists. Although released and banished because they were spreading sedition even from their jail cells, the Gortonists had good reason to fear that Massachusetts might act even more drastically in future. At much the same time, the Narragansett had been given a salutary example of Bay Colony justice when their leader Miantonomi was murdered by a rival tribe with the approval and assistance of the Massachusetts authorities.

Samuel Gorton gave a full account of his relations

with the local Indian tribes in *Simplicities Defence*, and never missed a chance to enlist Indian support for his actions. Sometimes, Gorton's accounts of Indian interpretations of events were clearly designed to give the impression that the Indians were a wise and worldly people, and he made use of even the most enigmatic of Indian criticisms of Massachusetts. When the Gortonists were making their way back to the Narragansett Bay after their release from prison, they encountered the local sachem. Gorton asked him what he knew of Captain Cook, leader of the expedition to capture the Shawomet men. The Indian replied that he had no call to judge Cook, except to note that to his people, "good Captains" were those who supported the few against the many.<sup>1</sup>

The Narragansett were much impressed by the Gortonists survival, having believed that the members of the sect would be unlikely to return from captivity in Massachusetts. Gorton took full advantage of the situation and held a carefully planned meeting with the Indians. One or more of the Gortonists had been ejected from every English colony in southern New England by that point, but they told the Indians that they were far from discouraged. On the contrary, as Englishmen, they were entitled to help from the authorities in London. However blatant this stage management was, it certainly worked: the Indians called an assembly on the spot and declared their allegiance to King Charles.<sup>2</sup>

The negotiations between the Gortonists and the Narragansett were not entirely one-sided, though. The Indians were aware that a civil war was being fought in England, and assumed that Massachusetts had released Gorton from prison because it feared retribution from

1 Gorton, *Simplicities Defence*, 85.

2 Gorton's tactics are considered in William G. Roelker, "Samuel Gorton's Master Stroke", *Rhode Island History* 2 (1943): 1-10. The sachems' pledge of allegiance to Charles I is in Gorton, *Simplicities Defence*, 90-92.



Gorton's English supporters.<sup>1</sup> Gorton undoubtedly disguised the fact that he was no more certain of a favourable hearing in London than anyone else. Still, assuming he could persuade the Warwick Commission to stop the Bay Colony's expansion, the Indians' interpretation might prove to be true, and thereby benefit them as well as the Shawomet settlers. Throughout his account, Gorton uses the Indians' view to stress that the Bay Colony was out of the control of England, and that it was the persecuted parties of New England who were loyal to the home government. The Gortonists, observed the Indians, "belonged to a better master than Massachusetts did."<sup>2</sup>

Gorton's intentions are revealed by the final sentence in this part of his account, in which he notes that he and his comrades were entrusted to convey the Indians submission to the King, "in case we went over about our own occasions." The attempt to be coy is markedly unconvincing. There is no doubt that a mission to England was being planned before the conference, and that the submission of Pessisus, Canonicus and Mixanno was organised as a potentially useful weapon in that mission's armoury. Gorton gave the Indian action a prominent place in *Simplicities Defence*, mentioning the submission of the tribe on his title page, and using it cleverly to stress his opinion that Massachusetts was acting without regard to the authority or laws of England. Using letters written to him since his departure from New England, Gorton repeatedly stressed the Indians' willingness to live peaceably under the laws of England, and the corresponding refusal of the Massachusetts authorities to allow them so to do.

Gorton's tactics did not in the long term save the

1 The elder Winthrop feared the consequences of Indians taking advantage of England's troubles. He recorded in his journal that the uprising in Virginia in 1644 came shortly after Indians observed Parliamentary and Royalist ships in combat in the Chesapeake Bay. See Winthrop, *Journal*, II; 167-8.

2 Gorton, *Simplicities Defence*, 89.

Narragansett, but they did help to save his own people. Edward Winslow responded to Gorton's charges by offering an alternative version of Miantonomi's death, but could not adequately argue against the Indians' subjection to England. Winslow did his best to blacken the reputations of Gorton and the Indians, and tried to explain away the English involvement in Miantonomi's murder by claiming that two colonists were there simply to ensure that the sachem was killed quickly and not tortured.<sup>1</sup> Winslow also repeated the point made earlier by Thomas Weld, who noted in his preface to John Winthrop's history of the Antinomian crisis that two Indian sachems had led their tribes in subjecting themselves to Massachusetts, seeking both protection and instruction in the Gospels.<sup>2</sup> After Gorton's revelation that some Indians were much happier to subject themselves to England than to Massachusetts, this tactic only added weight to Gorton's charge that the Bay was acting as a separate state and not paying due regard to England.

Winslow's raising of the Indian as an object of fear and treachery in the dispute with Gorton shortly gave way to more subtle tactics. The Indian question served a double purpose for Massachusetts in the 1640s and beyond. In the face of some mystified English queries as to why the colonists remained in New England when the Reformation effort in England was in need of good men, Massachusetts continued to use the conversion of Indians as a way of justifying the continued existence of the New England settlements. In addition, despite the scandal over misappropriated funds during the Weld-Peter mission, the Bay Colony recognised that significant sums of money would be sent to New England by benefactors, provided they could be given sufficient encouragement. This money could be diverted for non-evangelical purposes.

1 Winslow, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, 80-81.

2 See Winthrop, *A Short Story*, in Hall, ed. *The Antinomian Controversy*, 219; Winslow, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, 2.

Massachusetts attempted to keep Edward Winslow as their agent in England at the expense of the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, and weapons were also purchased by the Bay Colony with money originally donated for the maintenance of preachers.<sup>1</sup>

When he became involved in the gospel propagation enterprise, Edward Winslow moved into the most significant and successful phase of his propagandist career. Ironically, Winslow's own considerable writing experience was rarely employed in convincing England that the Indians were being converted: rather, he was instrumental in collecting and editing letters and evidence from the evangelical ministers of Massachusetts. Although Winslow can take some credit for persuading the Warwick Commission that Massachusetts should be left to deal with its own internal religious squabbles in the 1640s, his efforts in securing the creation of the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel were undoubtedly his greatest service to the leaders of the United Colonies. It is fitting that this should be so, for it nicely sums up Winslow's quarter-century of pamphleteering. In his first propaganda tract, *Good News from New England*, the Plymouth agent had devoted some effort to misrepresenting the Pilgrims' relations with the local Indians in order to justify that colony's acquisition of valuable land and trade resources.<sup>2</sup> By 1649, Winslow had widened his scope to much of New England, but tracts like *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel* were published with much the same intentions. By painting a rosy picture of attempts to convert and 'civilise' Indians, Winslow hoped to ensure a steady flow of money and goodwill from England to the Puritan colonies.

1 See Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 247.

2 Winslow was sent to England to explain away Miles Standish's massacre of Massachusetts Indians at Wessagusset. See George Willison, *Saints and Strangers*, (1946), 199-200; also Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 187.

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Agents therefore played their part in ensuring that New England- for good or ill- remained in the thoughts of a range of interested parties in the home country. Their primary task, however, was to make contact with England's leaders, and present persuasive petitions. The two chapters which follow analyse direct contacts between agents and colonial administrators and the decisions reached by the latter. Before that, however, the final section of this chapter will examine the ways in which agents attempted to influence the English authorities from a distance, through the pages of their polemical tracts.

Impressing powerful people was one of the major purposes of agency pamphleteering, agents took every available opportunity to commend their work to those in high office. Pamphlet dedications in the seventeenth century are often full of complimentary platitudes, and follow common forms. A sample of those written by agents reveals great stress on the "weighty, difficult, and distractful incombrances" faced by the commissions and committees of government, and hope that the "spirit of tenderness and compassion toward the oppressed" exhibited by leading political figures would result in the petition concerned receiving the "favourable approbation" of the English authorities.<sup>1</sup>

The Earl of Warwick and his Commission for the Plantations were regular recipients of such praise from agents in 1646/7, and the four pamphlets produced in those years by Samuel Gorton, Edward Winslow and William Vassall mark the zenith of competitive agency pamphleteering. All were closely related to missions, but

1 These examples come from John Clarke, *Ill Newes from New-England*, (1652), 3; Samuel Gorton, *Simplicities Defence*, (1646), Epistle Dedicatory (n.p.); Edward Winslow, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, (1647), Epistle Dedicatory (n.p.).



usually aimed at making a wider impression also. Together, they exemplify the tactics, methods and skills of agent pamphleteers.

Gorton was first in print with *Simplicities Defence Against Seven-Headed Policy*, published in the late summer of 1646. This work condemned Massachusetts for its actions against both the Shawomet settlers and the Narragansett Indians. Winslow found the work in circulation when he reached England early in 1647, and responded with *Hypocrisie Unmasked*. Shortly afterward, the Massachusetts Remonstrants put their case in *New-Englands Jonas Cast up at London*: the tract appeared under the authorship of Major John Child but was widely believed to come from the pen of William Vassall. Winslow's reply to the Remonstrants is contained in *New-Englands Salamander*.<sup>1</sup>

The central tactical difference between the first two pamphlets is that Gorton's was published after he had obtained a favourable hearing from the Warwick Commission, while Winslow's predated his own approach to the committee. Gorton's work was far from being redundant, though, and indeed demonstrates his political skills and awareness of the problems facing him. Gorton had no illusions that the Warwick Commission's initial decision would be the end of the matter. He spent the summer of 1646 preparing all the available documentary evidence to support his claim that the Bay Colony was acting beyond the bounds of its charter and, more

1 The chronology of these pamphlets is important. *Simplicities Defence* has a title-page date of 3 August 1646, and George Thomason's catalogue records it as having been received on 7 November 1646. *Hypocrisie Unmasked* appears under 2 October 1646 in Thomason, but the pamphlet refers explicitly to events in Massachusetts in November 1646, and Winslow did not leave Boston until mid-December. Assuming the title-page date (1646) to be accurate, the pamphlet must have been published between Winslow's arrival in England and the end of the Julian year on 24 March 1647. *New-Englands Jonas* is dated 1647, and was received by Thomason on 15 April. *New-Englands Salamander* is also dated 1647, and is listed by Thomason on 29 May 1647.

importantly, in violation of the laws of England. *Simplicities Defence* was intended as a more complete relation of events in New England than the petitioners had previously offered. Gorton had gained the sympathy of the Commissioners in the spring: now, he hoped to reinforce that advantage before the expected reaction from the Bay Colony.

Gorton was a sophisticated propagandist. He made extensive use of correspondence and official documents from the colonies to give his pamphlet a comprehensive provenance. To be sure, references to other works were nothing new in the pamphlets of the 1640s, and it was common for polemical tracts to be rebuffed later in almost line-by-line criticism. References to the bible filled the margins of texts relating to theological questions, and indeed many of those which had no bearing on theology at all. Gorton took this a step further, though. By publishing letters and official records gathered from Massachusetts, the Shawomet settlers and the Indians, Gorton was able to weave his story around a solid frame of evidence, much of it from sources hostile to himself. This was calculated to persuade readers of the veracity of the Shawomet settlers' case, but equally important, it put Massachusetts on the defensive. When Edward Winslow arrived to campaign for the Bay Colony, he found himself having to refute claims based in significant part on documents emanating from the colony which he represented.

Winslow's response was not long in coming after he reached England. The purpose of *Hypocrisie Unmasked* was rather different from Gorton's work, because it had not only to repair any damage done to the Bay Colony's image in general terms, but also represent the first part of Winslow's counter-petition to the authorities. The dedicatory passage in *Hypocrisie Unmasked* is in effect an open letter to the Warwick Commission. Winslow denied that the issue was one of persecutors and victims, and claimed that the real dispute was between defenders of

order and anarchists. Far from criticising Massachusetts, England should add its authority to the colony's attempts to curb the activities of "dangerous enemies" like Gorton and his Indian allies. Gorton himself, the "pestilent disturber" of New England society, should be kept in England and never allowed to return to America. With an eye on the possible arrival in England of one or more of the Remonstrant faction, Winslow also indicated that the Commission could do great service to Massachusetts by discouraging future petitions from those who had for some reason fallen foul of colonial justice.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of the last point is two-fold. First, Massachusetts was well aware of the damage being done to its image by the appearance of a variety of dissidents in England, each adding a new chapter to the growing volume of criticism of the New England authorities. Winslow himself was candid on this point, acknowledging that the "gross deformatory aspersion" cast by the Gortonists might "sadden the thoughts of our nation against us". Second, the Bay Colony needed a clear sign from England that the route of appeal to the home government was firmly closed, because this would make potential opponents of the Bay hierarchy think twice before clashing with the colonial leadership. New England's leaders feared the onset of a cycle of disruption, where dissident groups in the colonies appealed to England, encouraging other objectors in New England to follow the same path, whilst also giving the impression in England that the colonies were slipping into chaos. This might result in attempts by England to control the colonies directly, or simply persuade leading Englishmen that the northern colonies were not worthy of further investment. Either eventuality would seriously weaken the power of the leaders of New England.

Just as they employed every available piece of documentary evidence to give their work authority, agents

1 Winslow, *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, epistle dedicatory (n.p.).



were also given to quoting well known names as witnesses to events portrayed in pamphlets. The importance of individual English leaders to agents had already been noted, and pamphleteers rarely lost an opportunity to drop influential names, sometimes on the most feeble of excuses. Such tactics could of course be counter-productive if the individual involved had a bad reputation in England, but in general the impression of weight and veracity was successfully given.

Enlisting support from individuals was an important part of the conflict between Winslow and the Remonstrants. To Winslow's good fortune, the real issues between Massachusetts and the petitioners were lost amid controversy over a storm suffered by the ship carrying Vassall and his Remonstrance to England. Rumours spread quickly that the ship had been in severe peril until someone threw the petition and associated papers overboard, causing an immediate lessening of the storm. It is a measure of the influence of such accounts of divine intervention that William Vassall had to devote considerable space in *New-Englands Jonas* to denying the rumours.

Winslow, experienced propagandist that he was, made the most of the affair. He offered a list of reputable witnesses who were on the ship, and who were apparently willing to testify to the falsity of the Remonstrants' version. Given that his list included John Leveret, Winslow's witnesses were doubtless partial, but he made a point of stressing their military titles and the fact that Captain Sailes was a former Governor of Bermuda. In addition, Winslow noted that the Reverend Thomas Peter had originally intended to travel with the ship but had instead taken a different passage on the advice of, among others, John Cotton. What Winslow did not mention, of course, was that Peter's own voyage was if anything even more stormy than that experienced by the Remonstrants.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Winslow, *New-Englands Salamander*, 133, 131. Peter's account has already been noted: see Chapter 4 above.



While content to let superstition do most of his work for him in this case, Winslow still rarely missed an opportunity to score a point.

The cornerstone of Winslow's strategy against both the Gortonists and the Remonstrants was his attempt to secularise what the dissents portrayed as questions of faith. Such thinking had long been part of the defence of the Massachusetts authorities when they were accused of interfering in matters spiritual. Thomas Weld, for example, wrote of the "open contempt cast upon the face of the whole General Court" by Anne Hutchinson's Antinomians during the crisis of 1637-38.<sup>1</sup> The final manifestation of Winslow's campaign was the reprinting of *Hypocrisie Unmasked* in 1649. The new edition was identical apart from the title, which had been changed to *The Danger of Tolerating Levellers*. Winslow had come to see in the Bay Colony's struggle against the Gortonists a lesson to be learned by the English Parliament when faced with agitators and radicals who muddled the line between political and ecclesiastical reform.

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The role of agents in English affairs appears, therefore, to have been fraught with ambiguities. They found the support of some remigrants invaluable, while being embarrassed by those same individuals' decision to abandon the colonies. They played a full role in religious controversies while resenting the tendency of English commentators to subject their views, and those of their colonies, to close scrutiny. Acting as representatives and propagandists for their colonies also gave agents an opportunity to decide which side of the Atlantic suited them best as individuals, and the number

<sup>1</sup> See Weld's preface to John Winthrop, *A Short Story of the Rise, reign and ruine of the Antinomians, Familists and Libertines*, (1644) in Hall, ed. *The Antinomian Controversy*, 211.

who stayed permanently in England testifies to the ability of many colonists to rejoin the mainstream of English society.

In the second wave of agencies, in the early 1660s, agents had fewer opportunities to play a broader role in English society. This is in large part a reflection of just how important religious questions had been to most of the first generation. Without the freedom to express their views, the Restoration agents devoted more time to their missions and less to other activities. For agents, as for most English people, the return of the Stuarts required some changes, although perhaps not quite so many as has been supposed. It is to continuity and change in agents' dealings with England's colonial administrators that the next chapter turns.

## Interregnum Missions: Precedent and Stability

During the interregnum, agents had to approach English leaders who were potentially friendly toward the New England colonies. To some extent, this was far more problematic than dealing with governments which were clearly hostile. As the last chapter demonstrated, there was often some ambivalence in the transatlantic relationship, and agents could never be sure of their reception. Opponents of Stuart political and religious policy wielded power on both sides of the Atlantic, but while those in authority often had common origins and even common goals, the circumstances in which they governed were radically different. Variations in the political environment created a divergence in priorities and methods. England's leaders in the 1640s faced responsibilities and hazards which had in some degree been familiar to their New England brethren for a decade or more, but they often came to quite different solutions. By the mid-1640s New Englanders realised that hopes of a near-automatic affinity between them and England's new rulers were unrealistic. It fell to agents to overcome such hurdles.

England's interregnum governments were usually willing to listen to New England agents, which was at least an improvement on the chilly relations between the colonists and the court of Charles I. Indeed, the problems faced by agents throughout the interregnum were not that England's leaders actively opposed their petitions, but rather that New England's squabbles usually did not have the priority that the colonists expected. It came as an unpleasant surprise to the

Massachusetts leadership in particular that some of England's most influential figures did not consider the theocratic commonwealth to be of much relevance to England's broader overseas aims. Parliamentary factions did not find common cause with New England sects, however much individuals may have shared religious beliefs. In addition, leading members of the House of Lords, who had been prominent patrons to the colonising movement in the 1620s and 1630s, became increasingly disenchanted with the prospects of the northern colonies, and their views coloured the decisions of the Parliamentary government in the 1640s.

Most important were the linked questions of precedent and stability. Throughout the 1640s only a small minority of England's leaders was fully committed to drastic change in the structures of government, and where existing mechanisms and institutions posed no threat to the Parliamentary cause, adjustments and reforms were kept to a minimum. Such conservatism seemed to offer hope of maintaining some stability in the face of appeals for stronger action from radical elements, and formed the basis for most government during the interregnum: this policy was to a large extent mirrored in colonial administration. The only regime likely to make major alterations to the constitutional position of the New England colonies was the Commonwealth government of 1649-1653. It is no coincidence that some of the most fruitful personal ties between Rhode Island agents and English leaders involved the more radical parliamentarians who remained in office through the 1640s and came to dominate the Commonwealth period: nor is it surprising that Massachusetts feared the intentions of the English republic more than any other interregnum regime.

The interregnum saw the rise of committee government in many fields- not least in colonial administration- but it remained an era in which personalities could easily dominate. The first, and by no means the easiest task



facing an agent upon his arrival in England was the identification of the individuals and institutions to whom he must deliver his petitions. Even when the correct committee was identified the agent had to establish which members of that body were regular in their involvement and influential in their opinions. Such questions frustrated agents and have also confused some historians, but it was in the identification and exploitation of favourable contacts that the success of missions usually lay.

This chapter considers such practical aspects of an agent's work alongside the wider political and administrative concerns of England's leaders during the interregnum. It is chronological in structure, beginning with early attempts by the Short and Long Parliaments to act in colonial matters and tracing the work of agents through the committees and councils of successive regimes. The period from 1643 to 1655 saw almost constant agency activity, and agents' work reflects the often difficult means by which England and New England tried to reach a working accommodation.

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The Short Parliament, which sat from 13 April to 5 May 1640 was the first such assembly in England for more than a decade.<sup>1</sup> It had no direct impact on the New England colonies, and heard no petitions from agents, but it was nonetheless of some significance to colonial affairs in general. In particular, it allowed many of those who had been working to promote colonial enterprise during the 1630s to air their views in a public forum, and register their intention to use their influence to further the cause of overseas trade and plantations. It is clear from

<sup>1</sup> A recent analysis of the Short Parliament, which places proceedings in the wider context of Anglo-Scottish tension, is in Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies*, (1991), 90-123.

these brief proceedings that some of England's most prominent figures had been waiting for some time to present their grievances in Parliament, not least in colonial issues.

In his speech on 17 April 1640, veteran parliamentarian John Pym made much of the disaffection which had grown among merchants and traders over the previous decade. In particular, argued Pym, the burdens of new taxation had "been insupportable to the poor plantations...in diverse parts of the continent and islands of America." The southern tobacco-growing colonies were Pym's main concern here, but he went on to note that other parts of America, if well managed, offered opportunities for Charles I. "It is not unknown how weak, how distracted, how discontented, the Spanish colonies are in the West Indies", observed Pym, who believed that established settlements in New England, Virginia and Bermuda might provide men to invade and occupy Spanish territory.<sup>1</sup>

The prospect of Parliament taking such initiatives in colonial affairs was seen as a double-edged sword in New England, and raised some early fears about the implications of Parliamentary involvement. Clearly, any steps that Parliament might take to improve the trading prospects of colonial merchants would be welcome. At the same time, Massachusetts was already worried by remigration, and by suggestions that some of its leading men were planning to move to the Caribbean. If prominent figures like John Pym publicly supported this latter idea, then the Bay Colony was understandably cautious in its dealings with Pym and his colleagues: too close a relationship with such people might have been interpreted as a willingness to heed their advice. As will be seen, the northern colonies dealt with Parliament regularly throughout the interregnum, and never approached the exiled king. This recognition of where power lay must not

1 Stock, *Proceedings*, I: 97-8.

be confused with an unambiguous support for successive Parliamentary regimes, however.

New England's first direct contact with England's leaders in the 1640s was with the Long Parliament, which first met on 3 November 1640. It is important to stress that the calling of this body did not immediately herald a dramatic breach between king and Parliament. In particular, Parliament made no attempt to challenge Charles's jurisdiction over the colonies during its first two years. In October 1641, for example, the Lords heard a petition from Anthony Panton of Virginia, who complained about the actions of the colonial government. Various members of the Virginia elite were in London at the time, and the Lords ordered the temporary detention of three men, including the newly appointed governor William Berkeley. There is no suggestion that Parliament saw this as an opportunity to exercise control over England's most important colony, though. Berkeley was allowed to continue to Virginia the following month after Parliament satisfied itself of the validity of his commission from Charles I.<sup>1</sup>

When the king and his court broke with Parliament and left London in 1642, agents and their colonies were placed in something of a quandary. Clearly, anyone who petitioned one side risked antagonising the other, and there was some initial doubt over the true location of effective power in England. In at least one case the confusion led to an open split: Virginia's agent George Sandys petitioned the House of Commons, but was sharply rebuked by the colonial assembly which in turn appealed successfully to the king. Support for Charles and the Royalist cause remained widespread in Virginia, in part because Parliament was perceived as being more likely to revive the old, and much dreaded, Virginia Company. The dispute between agent Sandys and his employers was

<sup>1</sup> The case is charted in various documents printed in Stock, *Proceedings*, I: 123-128; Berkeley was 'released' on 5 November 1641.

concluded by a letter from Charles I, who was trying to gather his forces in York, in which any prospect of a return to Company rule was emphatically denied: Charles clearly recognised one issue which would ensure the loyalty of his subjects in Virginia.<sup>1</sup>

There is no evidence that Massachusetts ever considered appealing to the king. In part, this stemmed from bitter experience. The last royal intervention in New England affairs had been the attempted recall of the Bay Colony charter, and individual settlers' memories of royal government in the 1620s were no more pleasant. Although Charles might have welcomed any support offered to him in the dangerous times of the mid-1640s, he would have had to be desperate indeed to receive agents who were, in his view, of much the same persuasion as his Parliamentary opponents.

There were other important reasons for directing petitions to Parliament. The Long Parliament was based in London and therefore controlled or influenced the most powerful economic factors which affected New England. The creditors with whom the first Massachusetts agents were commissioned to negotiate were mainly based in London, and there was no better place to try to alleviate the Bay's shaky financial state. The southern colonies, with their established trade in plantation crops, were able to maintain economic ties with Royalist England through western ports like Bristol, but New England's commercial ties were with merchants and supporters in London, or in the eastern counties where the colonial leadership had formerly lived.

Parliament, sitting in London, and led by men who in many cases had some sympathy for the New England exiles, seemed a much more promising option than the refugee royal court. Early in 1643, Thomas Weld and Hugh Peter

<sup>1</sup> An account of case, including a copy of Charles' 5 July 1642 letter is found in "Extract from a manuscript collection of annals relative to Virginia" in Force, *Tracts*, II: 3, 8.



petitioned for a customs exemption and for leave to raise money in the London parishes for the transportation of poor children to a new life in the colonies. The House of Commons granted an extension to the original customs-free period included in the Massachusetts charter, and was sufficiently impressed by the agents' ecclesiastical credentials to authorise the collection as well.<sup>1</sup> The removal to the colonies of vagrants, orphans and others acting as a drain on the parish purse was one of the frequently stated advantages of having such plantations, and Parliament was happy to encourage the Bay Colony in this matter.

Parliament's apparent willingness to consider colonial affairs did not go unnoticed. A growing number of petitions, mainly from anti-Royalist parties interested in the Caribbean plantations, reached Parliament during 1643, and there were also fears that the king was planning to appoint governors and try to take control of colonial shipping.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, Parliament had to establish itself as the unquestioned authority over England's colonial resources, but it was in some measure reluctant so to do. Colonial affairs had always rested in the hands of the executive rather than the legislative branch of government: kings and privy councils rather than parliaments held sway over English colonies. In colonial matters, as in others, Parliament was uneasy about setting up new structures which would mark a clear departure from recent precedents. The Long Parliament did not envisage itself as having executive powers in its early years and only gradually developed ways of exercising such a role as the 1640s progressed and relations with Charles I deteriorated.

The Long Parliament's first major step in colonial administration was the establishment of the Warwick Commission on 2 November 1643. Six peers and twelve

1 Stock, *Proceedings*, I: 139-40.

2 Stock, *Proceedings*, I: 147.

commoners were appointed to the Committee of Lords and Commons for Foreign Plantations, more commonly named after its chairman Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick.<sup>1</sup> The Commission was a constitutional compromise, in that it was chosen from the ranks of MPs and Lords but did not have to report on its activities to Parliament; in addition, Warwick's authority came from his appointment as High Admiral and Governor-in-Chief of the Colonies in America, rather than his membership of the House of Lords. These distinctions maintained a form of executive authority for colonial affairs at a time when there was no overall executive that Parliament could recognise.

The Commission had wide powers, but it remained reluctant to interfere in colonial affairs. In particular, it rarely took action unless first approached by agents or colonies. Even then, its procedures were slow and its decisions often inconclusive. Nowhere is this tendency more marked than its dealings with Maryland, which, with its Catholic proprietor and vocal Protestant faction might have expected close attention from England's new leaders. In November 1645, the Commission considered a petition from a number of inhabitants of Maryland, who objected to the "tyrannical government" headed by Baron Baltimore. Sure enough, the Commission concluded that the petitioners had a strong case, and that it would be a good idea for the colony to be "settled in Protestant hands." Still, it did not issue any orders under Warwick's authority, preferring to urge that a Parliamentary ordinance be passed.<sup>2</sup>

Warwick himself was charged with drafting this ordinance, but it took him a full year to present his views to the Lords. The draft ordinance was forceful: it declared Baltimore's patent void, displaced the leading

1 The ordinance which established the Commission is in *Lords Journals* VI: 291-2. See also Stock, *Proceedings*, I: 147-149. Membership and other information is given in appendix 2 below.

2 Stock, *Proceedings*, 171-172.

officers of the colony and announced that Parliament would forthwith appoint a new governor.<sup>1</sup> In the event, while the Lords approved the measure, it was never presented to the Commons. The Lords called, and cancelled, several meetings with Baltimore during the months which followed, and heard various petitions from him and from his opponents.<sup>2</sup> No further action was taken by the Commission either. Much the same procrastination can be observed in the case of the Caribbean settlements, despite several petitions from them in the same period.<sup>3</sup>

Part of the reason for the Commission's reluctance to become more closely involved in the southern and island colonies was that there would undoubtedly have been some resistance from Royalist factions there. Lord Admiral Warwick knew better than anyone that Parliament did not have the naval strength to fight a civil war and mount expeditions to the colonies at the same time. As will be seen, circumstances would be different in the early 1650s, but during the years that Warwick's Commission administered colonial affairs it was restricted both by practical constraints and by a more general reluctance to step beyond existing precedents.

In its dealings with New England, the Commission demonstrated a similar tendency to react to petitions rather than act on its own initiative. New England agents set much of the agenda for the Commission. At a time when most members were engaged in more pressing political issues, agents could claim a near-monopoly on information reaching the Commission. Surviving decrees therefore reveal as much about the original petitions from the agents as they do about the decision-making process itself.

The only evidence surviving from the Warwick

1 Stock, *Proceedings*, 183-4.

2 See, for example, petitions from Baltimore and a group of London merchants both heard on 4 March 1647 in Stock, *Proceedings*, 194, 195.

3 Stock, *Proceedings*, 187-194.

Commission's New England proceedings are letters issued to petitioners, and also some rare references in the writings of those who came into contact with it. There are no minutes of meetings, or any other detailed accounts of discussions. The signatures which appear on Commission documents are the only indication of the involvement of individual members. Signatures, of course, cannot reveal the frequency of attendance at meetings or the strength of opinions held. In addition, just because someone did not sign a particular document does not mean he disapproved of its contents. Nonetheless, the signatures can give some indication of which members were most active and interested in particular issues.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence about individual committee members is important to the study of any interregnum body, because an understanding of the interests and activities of decision-makers allows judgements to be made about the role of personal, religious or political factors in the reception accorded to agents. In the case of the Warwick Commission, a number of men need to be studied. The requirement that a majority of the members approve Commission decrees ensured a far higher degree of participation than might otherwise have been the case.<sup>2</sup> Of the original eighteen members, one died before any official decrees were issued, but only two others failed to sign at least one Commission order.<sup>3</sup> On 21 March 1646, the Warwick Commission was more than doubled in size, after the members themselves argued for an expansion in

1 Drafts of some Commission letters, written by secretary William Jessop, are in British Library, Sloane MSS, 184 f114-135. Most of the letters given to agents have been printed, and references to these are in appendix 2.

2 This rule was unusual for colonial committees. Later bodies, which did not have the same executive powers, frequently set their quorum level at a small percentage of their total membership.

3 John Pym died on 8 December 1643. Oliver Cromwell and Sir Gilbert Gerard never signed a Commission document.



the interest of having more frequent meetings.<sup>1</sup> This sample of signatures is large enough to allow informed analysis of the motives and interests of the Commission.

Seven Commission documents relating to New England survive, ranging in time from 1644 to 1648. Together, they represent the English leaders' efforts to maintain an authoritative role in colonial affairs in the midst of domestic turmoil. While membership and circumstances changed over time, the priorities of the Warwick Commission with regard to New England remained largely constant. This section considers in turn the case of the 1644 Narragansett Patent, the 1646-47 dispute between Edward Winslow and the Bay Colony's critics Gorton and Vassall, and the final proclamation of the Commission in 1648.

Roger Williams' 1644 patent for Rhode Island has already been mentioned: it formed the base upon which subsequent political consolidation in the Narragansett region was built. Williams' work was challenged by Massachusetts agent Thomas Weld, and had Weld been successful, the Bay Colony would have acquired a legitimate title to the region to accompany its military capabilities. The conflict between the two agents is notable in that they never competed face to face, but rather pursued completely separate paths in pursuit of the same objective. That Williams reached his goal and Weld did not owes more to the wider activities of the agents and the constraints under which they had to operate than to their specific claims over the Narragansett Bay.

Both agents completed their missions claiming to have secured documents from the Warwick Commission. Weld sent a patent to Boston, dated 10 December 1643, which granted control of the Narragansett country to Massachusetts, and Williams returned to Rhode Island with

1 Stock, *Proceedings*, 176-7.

a patent for the same region dated 14 March 1644.<sup>1</sup> The two documents have caused a considerable amount of historiographical comment, which is worth examining because much of it has missed the point. The debate has assumed that Weld and Williams were actively and openly competing for a patent which they intended to use as the basis for their future relations with England and with their neighbouring colonies. The evidence indicates, however, that only Williams had this intention, and that Weld was forced to have much more limited aims.

The arguments which have set the tone for most subsequent analysis were originally aired in the 1860s, when leading members of the Massachusetts Historical Society conducted a debate over the two patents. Charles Deane, writing in February 1862, argued that the Massachusetts patent was genuine and legitimate, but that it had not been used by the colony because of fears that such use would imply subjection to the English Parliament.<sup>2</sup> Later that year Thomas Aspinwall challenged Deane, denying the validity of the patent, and alleging that Weld failed in a clandestine attempt to gather a majority of the Commission's signatures by approaching them individually.<sup>3</sup> More recently, historians have continued to characterise the Williams/Weld question as a failure on Weld's part to gain the necessary number of 'votes'.<sup>4</sup>

The dispute over the number of signatures hinges on two clauses in the original ordinance which established the Warwick Commission. The Commission had a quorum of

1 Weld's patent is printed in *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 9 (1857): 41-43. Williams' Narragansett Patent is in *RI Rec I*: 143-146.

2 Deane, "The So-Called Narragansett Patent", *MHS Proceedings* (1860-62): 402.

3 Aspinwall, "The Narragansett Patent", *MHS Proceedings*, (1862-63): 41-77, 42.

4 See, for example, Ola E. Winslow, *Master Roger Williams*, (1957), 187; LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 227(n).

five (including Warwick himself), but could only take major decisions involving the constitutional rights and privileges of colonies if a majority of the eighteen members was involved.<sup>1</sup> Williams' patent had ten signatures, but Weld's only had nine.<sup>2</sup> Strangely enough, however, both men could in fact claim to have secured the necessary majority, because Commission member John Pym died on 8 December 1643 and was not replaced until the following August: for most of 1644, therefore, nine signatures constituted a majority.

Despite having this reasonable counter to any protest about signatures, Massachusetts never tried to use the document in its dealings with England. It only once officially invoked Weld's patent, when threatening Rhode Island in 1645. The Bay Colony informed Roger Williams on 27 August 1645 that it had recently received a patent from England, and that Rhode Island's right to occupy the territory concerned was therefore abrogated.<sup>3</sup> Williams refused to be intimidated, and Massachusetts did not pursue the matter. Weld's document surfaced briefly again in the early 1660s, when the Atherton Company of land speculators listed it as part of its claim to the land west of the Narragansett Bay. By that time the patent was widely regarded as a fake. Rhode Island President Brenton informed Atherton planter Edward Hutchinson that he had seen a copy long before and that the patent was "not fairly got". England's archives had been searched, claimed Brenton, and the only patent to be found was that gained by Williams.<sup>4</sup> The Earl of Warwick himself claimed never to have heard of any formally-passed Massachusetts patent from 1643. Samuel Gorton asked about it during his own mission in 1646, and

1 *Lords Journals*, VI: 292.

2 See Appendix 2, below.

3 See *RI Rec I*: 133.

4 Hutchinson to Massachusetts Secretary Edward Rawson April 2 1662, in *Mass Archives*, 2: 26.

Warwick denied all knowledge of any

charter for these parts [other] than what Mr. Williams had obtained, and he was sure, that charter which the Massachusetts Englishmen pretended had never passed that table.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps even more importantly, Edward Winslow did not use the patent as the basis for his claims against the Gortonists in 1646/7, despite its giving clear title to the land occupied by the Shawomet settlers.

The Bay Colony's reluctance to use Weld's patent in its dealings with the English authorities stems from an awareness that the document was less than wholly valid, but the problem is one of chronology rather than signatures. The territorial clauses of the two patents offer convincing evidence that Weld's patent was issued after that of Williams, and not three months before, as is indicated by the dates on the documents themselves. Many years after the event, Roger Williams recalled having drawn up the boundaries which he wished assigned to his colony:

The bounds for this our first charter I (having ocular knowledge of persons, places and transactions) did honestly and conscientiously (as in the holy presence of God) draw up from Pawcatuk River, which I then believed and still do is free from all English claims and conquests.<sup>2</sup>

Sure enough, Williams' document conveys the title to the

tract of land in the continent of America aforesaid called by the name of the Narriganset Bay bordering North and North East, on the patent of Massachusetts East and South East on Plymouth patent, South of the ocean and on the West and North West inhabited by Indians called Narrogunneucks alias Narrigansets the whole tract extending about twenty and five English miles unto the

1 Roger Williams recorded this conversation in a letter to John Mason on 22 June 1670; see LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 613.

2 Williams to Mason, 22 June 1670 in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 612.



Pequot River and country...<sup>1</sup>

The corresponding passage in Weld's patent is remarkably similar. It describes the territory as being the

tract of land lying or being within the Continent of America called or known by the name of Narragansett Bay bordering north and north east on the patent or plantation of Massachusetts, East and south east upon the patent or plantation of Plymouth, south on the ocean and on the west and north west inhabited by Indians called Mahigganeucks, alias Narrogansetts, the whole tract extending about twenty and five English miles unto the Pequot River and country...<sup>2</sup>

Despite the slight variations between the two documents, it is clear that the territorial boundaries are identical, and that one patent was designed to conflict directly with the other. All significant parts of the description- even the alternative name for the region's largest Indian tribe- are identical in wording. This, despite the complete lack of similarity in the rest of the texts, which use different vocabulary and stress varying reasons for the settlements.

There are sound reasons for believing Williams' claim to have devised the boundaries of the patent, and for concluding that Weld copied Williams' document.<sup>3</sup> Weld never concerned himself with territorial questions prior to this point, or indeed ever again afterward, and it is likely that he only became aware of the issue when Williams secured his patent in 1644. Then, by preparing a document of his own, carefully worded to contradict Williams' patent, Weld could attempt to gather signatures from sympathetic commissioners, back-date the document and send it to Boston in the hope that it would provide

1 See *RI Rec I*: 144.

2 See *NEHGR*, 9 (1857): 42.

3 Both patents could of course have been copied from a third source, but no description of the Narragansett region survives in Williams' own previous writings or correspondence, and nothing comparable exists in any of the other sources examined for this study.

the Bay Colony with ammunition against Rhode Island. Williams left England with his own patent in the late summer of 1644, and Weld may not even have started his efforts until then. Williams would have had no knowledge of Weld's activities until the patent reached Massachusetts in time to<sup>b<sub>c</sub></sup> quoted in the General Court's letter to Williams in August 1645.

Further evidence that Weld's patent was irregular comes from the fact that the list of Commission members in his document does not include John Pym, although that issued to Williams does. By omitting Pym's name and dating his document just two days after Pym's death, Weld was attempting to construct a direct counter to Williams' work. As far as the Commission was concerned, Pym's name remained on the membership roll until he was replaced, and so Williams' officially sealed document contains the full list. Weld, of course, had to drop Pym's name in order that his nine signatures constitute a majority.

Why did Weld have to go to such lengths? In large part, the answer lies with Sir Henry Vane. Vane was instrumental in securing Williams' patent in the spring of 1644. In part, Vane's assistance owes much to religious factors: he was one of the few parliamentarians who actively espoused religious toleration in the early 1640s, and the lack of any prescribed religious forms in Williams' patent was subsequently mirrored in Vane's plans for reform in England.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately for Massachusetts, Vane had also been one of Anne Hutchinson's supporters during the Antinomian crisis in the late 1630s. At around the time Williams' patent was being prepared, Vane's experiences in Massachusetts were being aired in public again by the re-publication by Weld of John Winthrop's *Short Story*. Vane is clearly alluded to both in Winthrop's text and Weld's preface. Weld noted that one of the greatest tragedies of the affair was the involvement of many leading figures in Boston, while

1 See Rowe, *Sir Henry Vane*, 195-6.

Winthrop criticised the role of the then Massachusetts Governor, who was of course Henry Vane.<sup>1</sup>

Weld could hardly make an official application to the Commission having so recently published material which could only serve to remind one of its leading members of a painful dispute with the Massachusetts establishment. Neither Vane nor his close associate Cornelius Holland signed Weld's patent, and the agent probably avoided them carefully, concentrating on Commission members who were unlikely to have strong ties to the other side. Indeed, five of the men who signed Weld's document also signed Williams', implying that they were less than committed to the causes involved.

Far from being a shabby end to a less than successful agency, Thomas Weld's efforts deserved more gratitude from his colony than he ever received. It is a measure of Weld's success that he managed to gather nine signatures for his patent. Left alone by Hugh Peter to conduct the mission to which they were both assigned, and frequently criticised by Massachusetts for failing to work miracles, Weld persistently tried to make the best of a difficult situation. Limited as an agent by his religious activities, he nonetheless provided Massachusetts with a potential means of interfering in Rhode Island. The fact that Weld and his colony alike were aware that the document had no validity as part of future dealings with England is more a measure of the complexity of the agent's task than an example of any failure.

Having established that Henry Vane's presence on the Commission hindered Weld, it should be stressed that it was not necessarily enough to guarantee Williams success. Vane was an influential member of the Commons by 1644, but the Warwick Commission included men who had rather more experience and prestige. Not the least of these were the peers, who remained at the apex of long-standing

1 Winthrop, *Short Story*, in Hall, ed. *The Antinomian Controversy*, 208, 254.

networks of patronage and kin. It is impossible to identify with absolute certainty all the factors which persuaded the Commission to approve Williams' claim, but there is evidence of three important themes, common to earlier and later judgements, in the negotiations over the Narragansett patent.

First, Williams played on the oft-stated wish of leading Englishmen that the northern colonies would be able to produce some kind of useful crop or product. Early commentators had noticed the timber which grew in America, and particularly in New England, and concluded that it might be a source of masts and other important naval supplies.<sup>1</sup> Aware that Warwick and various other Commissioners were intimately concerned with the operation of Parliament's Navy, Williams took the opportunity to promote the Narragansett in these terms, and his patent included a clause recognising the region as one suited for the building and outfitting of ships. If Rhode Island might at last provide the long-awaited economic return from the New England colonies, the Commission could not let the opportunity pass by.

Secondly, Williams made sure to mention the Indians. As demonstrated in the last chapter, contact with the Indians was one measure by which England judged the colonies, and Rhode Island's record was better than most. The colony towns, claimed Williams, had begun to "make a nearer neighbourhood and society with the great body of the Narragassetts, which may in time by the blessing of God...lay a sure foundation of happiness to all America."<sup>2</sup> The publication of his *Key into the Language of America* the previous year had helped to establish Williams' credentials as an authority on the Indian question, and doubtless added a ring of truth to what was a fairly standard point made by New England agents.

1 See, for example, *New Englands Plantation*, 7-8, in *Force, Tracts*, I; *The Planters Plea*, 15, in *Force, Tracts*, II.

2 *RI Rec*, I: 143.



Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Williams always made it clear that his settlement was far removed from Massachusetts, and did not infringe on any other colony's charter rights. Even Weld had made no attempt to claim charter jurisdiction, defending his own claim on the grounds that the growing population of Massachusetts needed more land than had been originally envisaged. If the refugees who established Providence had stayed closer to Boston, and petitioned Parliament for the right to govern a settlement which was clearly within the bounds of the Bay charter, Williams might not have been successful in his mission. As will be seen, the Warwick Commission placed much importance on the rights of jurisdiction held by colonies within their own boundaries.

The first encounter with the Warwick Commission was therefore a victory for Rhode Island. Williams secured the patent which was to serve as the basis for the gradual unification of the Narragansett towns, and which also established a precedent for control over that particular region. Authority in other parts of New England was to be a continuing point of contention throughout the Warwick Commission's tenure, and the next set of missions brought a range of more complicated factors to bear.

The last chapter drew attention to the flurry of agency pamphleteering in 1646/7, and the corresponding activity before the Warwick Commission marks the busiest period in that body's history. Against the background of the increasingly fraught political atmosphere of these years, the Commission remained conservative and was keen to follow available precedents where possible. In large part, this approach was due to the influence of those Commissioners who sat in the House of Lords, and who had thoroughly entrenched views about the New England colonies.

Briefly, the four documents issued by the Commission

between May 1646 and June 1647 were as follows. On 15 May 1646, Samuel Gorton was issued with a safe-conduct pass which his fellow agent Randall Holden subsequently presented to the authorities in Boston; the same day saw the directive from the Commission to Massachusetts which stated that the Gortonists were settled outwith the boundaries of the Bay Colony and were therefore not to be harassed.<sup>1</sup> On 25 May 1647, the Commission, realising that William Vassall and the Massachusetts Remonstrants were being encouraged to appeal to England by the success of the Gortonists, issued a letter stating that internal matters would be left to the colonial authorities. Massachusetts should continue to exercise its chartered authority over those living within its jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup> Finally, on July 22, 1647, the Commission's final decision in favour of the Gortonists was issued: the Bay Colony had failed to demonstrate why it should exert control over the Narragansett territory, and should do no further harm to the Shawomet settlers.<sup>3</sup>

The wider activities of Commission members during this period of political upheaval have encouraged historians to analyse their decisions along factional lines. In particular, possible links between agents and groups of Commissioners who shared religious or political beliefs have been posited as a motive for the Commission's actions. Robert E. Wall, for example, argues that members belonging to different Parliamentary factions exercised a significant influence: in this interpretation, the failure of the partly-Presbyterian Remonstrant dissidents from Massachusetts in 1647 owes much to the role of Commissioners of a more radical

1 Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 282-3; Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 292-3, LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 454-6.

2 Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 336-8; Hazard, *State Papers*, I: 551-2.

3 Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 335-6; Hazard, *State Papers*, I: 552-3.

congregationalist tendency.<sup>1</sup> Wall is correct in his assumption that the Commission's most active year, in 1646/7, demonstrates the range of religious and political questions faced by the Warwick Commission, and the extent to which its members were influenced by their wider political and social allegiances. However, the following analysis reveals that England's leaders saw colonial questions in a much wider context than the squabbles of New England, and were unlikely to pay much regard to individual groups in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Any analysis of the Warwick Commission's motives must rely in part on the signature lists of the documents issued to petitioners. Of the four items from 1646/7, three commissioners signed all four, four signed three, seven signed two, and ten signed one.<sup>3</sup> Robert Wall concludes that the Commission was evenly balanced between the two main parliamentary factions- Presbyterians and Independents- when it first heard Gorton's petition in the spring of 1646, but that it had moved to having a clear Independent majority in the following year, when it heard the petition of the Massachusetts Remonstrants. The 22 July 1647 letter which quashed the hopes of the Remonstrants was signed almost exclusively by Independents. In Wall's view, this is crucial, with the Independent majority refusing to accept the appeal of the

1 Wall, *Massachusetts Bay: The Crucial Decade*, (1972), 215-7.

2 The analysis offered here uses evidence for the factional allegiance of members of the Warwick Commission found in general studies of the Long Parliament. Biographical details of individual figures come either from the following works or the standard sources listed at the beginning of Appendix 4. See David Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, (1971); D. Brunton and D.H. Pennington, *Members of the Long Parliament*, (1954); Mary Keeler, *The Long Parliament, 1640-1641*, (1954); and Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament 1648-1653*, (1974).

3 A table showing which members signed which documents is in Appendix 2, below.



Remonstrants, who had some Presbyterians in their ranks.<sup>1</sup>

As Wall recognises, though, the factional divisions in the Long Parliament were never in fact as clear-cut as this summary implies. Neither 'Presbyterian' nor 'Independent' was a clearly defined label in the mid-1640s, and definitions have not become much more useful since. A major cause of confusion stems from the fact that the words signify different things when applied to political and religious matters. Worse still, they become almost meaningless in the context of New England's divergent religious development. As a religious term, Independency was generally equivalent to Congregationalism, and stressed the autonomy of individual church gatherings. Politically, it implied a commitment to increased Parliamentary authority and a diminution of royal powers. Not all religious Independents were politically radical, however, and not all religious Presbyterians wanted a powerful political executive alongside their more regimented church policies. By the very end of the 1640s, with some political Independents favouring religious toleration, Massachusetts Congregationalists found themselves in the unlikely position of being complimented by English Presbyterians. The situation is made no clearer by the shifting strengths and priorities of Parliamentary factions as the civil wars progressed.<sup>2</sup>

Even if the factional division between Presbyterians and Independents were to be taken at face value, however, there are ambiguities in the Warwick Commission evidence which greatly reduce the likelihood of any factional alignments spanning the Atlantic. Reliance on signature lists to construct a voting pattern for members of two opposing groups inevitably has an element of uncertainty.

1 Wall, *Massachusetts Bay*, 215-217.

2 Some general comments and bibliographical references regarding this issue are given in Chapter 1 above. The issue of toleration in the transatlantic context is further discussed in Chapter 5.



For example, the two documents issued by the Commission on 15 May 1646 to Samuel Gorton have an identical purpose and argument, but different signature lists: seven members signed both, while ten others signed only one. Clearly, not all members who supported a particular measure necessarily signed the relevant paper. If signatures from both of the 15 May 1646 documents are considered together, the Commission at that point had a slight Independent majority, rather than being evenly balanced as Robert Wall claims.<sup>1</sup>

When individual Commission members are considered, the discrepancies grow larger, and it becomes increasingly difficult to argue that English Presbyterians supported the Remonstrants. Independent MP George Fenwick, for example, had promised the elder John Winthrop that he would try to prevent the Warwick Commission from interfering in the internal affairs of Massachusetts. He opposed the Remonstrants, to be sure, but he also signed the safe conduct pass issued to the Bay's arch-enemy Gorton.<sup>2</sup> The Presbyterian Earl of Manchester supported Gorton and opposed William Vassall. William Waller, the Commission's most active Presbyterian, was one of the Eleven Members purged by the army in July 1647: this happened after he had signed the letter blocking the Remonstrants' petition.<sup>3</sup>

1 Using Wall's factional labels, the signatories are the six Presbyterians Warwick, Northumberland, Manchester, Waller, Vassall and Rudyard, and the six Independents Pembroke, Holland, Purefoy, Bond, Allen and Fenwick. Wall did not include Independent Alexander Rigby in his calculations. Given that Warwick was bound to sign all Commission documents his role transcended factional considerations. See Wall, *Massachusetts Bay*, 216.

2 Fenwick to Winthrop, 6 April 1647, in *Winthrop Papers* V: 141-2.

3 Three other Commission members- Clotworthy, Stapleton and Glyn- withdrew at the same time as Waller, but they had never been active in the Commission's deliberations. See *Commons Journal* V: 250. Underdown discusses the circumstances surrounding the case of the Eleven Members in *Pride's Purge*, 82-3.

The key to the Warwick Commission's actions is that its most influential members saw New England in a wider context than just the immediate factional issues at stake in 1646/7. New England agents may have presented more petitions than any other colonial interest, but leading Englishmen had already begun to lose interest in the northern colonies by the time the Commission was established. As the 1640s progressed, the details of New England's squabbles were increasingly lost on members of the Commission, and their reactions to the Gortonists and the Remonstrants are part of a more general reluctance to become embroiled in the minute detail of New England disputes.

Who were the most influential Commission members in 1646/7? One of the assumptions behind the factional analysis of the Warwick Commission discussed above is that members of the House of Lords were already in a declining position in 1647, as part of an inexorable process leading to the abolition of the Upper House two years later: in this scenario, the views of the Commons automatically take precedence.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the peers maintained their influence numerically and also in terms of the tone set by Commission documents. The final decisions of the Commission, which discouraged further petitioning from dissident groups in New England, are entirely consistent with the views of leading Lords, and should have come as no surprise to New Englanders, and to the Bay leadership in particular.

The very nature of the aristocracy's involvement in colonisation contributed to a gradually developing gulf between them and the New England settlers. The great landed families who formed the upper echelons of English society provided some of the most prominent potential supporters of New England agents. Many of the colonising projects of the early seventeenth century relied on the patronage of aristocrats and their political clients and

<sup>1</sup> Wall sees the prestige of the Lords as having "declined considerably" by 1647. See Wall, *Massachusetts Bay*, 216.

supporters, and some of the most committed colonial sponsors and planners formed the House of Lords' contingent on the Warwick Commission. The colonial companies brought together leading figures who would eventually work together in the two Houses of Parliament and on the battlefields of the 1640s.<sup>1</sup> In addition, these commissioners had no hesitation in overlapping their interests and wearing different 'hats'. Commission members who had financial interests in a particular expedition had no qualms about using their official posts to further that project.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately for New England, there was no direct correlation between men who supported colonisation in the 1620s and men who were willing to help the northern colonies two decades later. Few of the leading peers seriously considered emigration. Instead, they looked on the colonies as an extension of their landed interests and patronage. Some Lords and their clients did contemplate moving to the Caribbean in the late 1630s, but they were easily diverted when the calling of a Parliament began to look likely. Had they in fact crossed the ocean it would have been to establish plantation colonies in which they would have ruled as feudal lords.

1 J.H. Hexter stresses the importance of such connections, while warning against a contemporary opinion that the entire Parliamentary uprising was hatched in the Providence Company rooms in Grey's Inn Lane. See Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym*, (1941), 77. Interest in the role of the English opposition in colonisation has recently been revived by Karen Kupperman, "Definitions of Liberty on the Eve of the Civil War: Lord Say and Sele, Lord Brooke and the American Puritan Colonies." *Historical Journal* (1989): 17-33.

2 For example, four of the signatures on a Warwick Commission document of 4 November 1645, guaranteeing liberty of conscience to the Somers Islands in the Caribbean, belong to men who had recently signed a plea as directors of the Somers Islands Company urging that the islanders remain loyal to Parliament. The members concerned were Warwick, Lord Saye, Sir Benjamin Rudyerd and Cornelius Holland. See J.H. Lefroy, *Memorials of the Discovery and Early Settlement of the Bermudas*, (1877-79), vol 1, 586-590, 600-603.

While the piety of the peers should not be underestimated, their colonial vision was in some contrast to the theocratic commonwealth of Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup>

Agents were well aware of the colonial interests of the peers. They may have addressed their petitions to the chairman of the Warwick Commission as a matter of protocol, but they also hoped that he would be personally sympathetic. Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick, held the dual role of Lord Admiral and Governor of all the Plantations in America, and was well known in New England.<sup>2</sup> Warwick inherited a considerable fortune from his father, and added another of his own making: both men were backers and owners of privateering ships. Warwick caused considerable embarrassment to the East India Company in 1622, when he almost captured a treasure ship belonging to the mother of the Mogul Emperor.<sup>3</sup> Through the 1620s, and again after 1638, Warwick's privateers were at the forefront of the harassment of Spanish ships in the Americas, at times serving as a surrogate navy. Captain William Jackson led a fleet of seven of the Earl's ships and 1100 men in an attempt to capture Jamaica in 1642, while Warwick himself was taking charge of the official navy and ensuring it obeyed Parliament rather than the

1 Although more concerned with the gentry than the aristocracy, J.T. Cliffe provides numerous examples of the links between the gentry and local peers, and of the prevailing religious concerns of both groups; see Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry*, (1984) and *Puritans in Conflict*, (1988). The plans of leading gentry to emigrate are examined in *The Puritan Gentry*, 204.

2 There is no full biography of Warwick, although his maritime career has attracted some attention. See Wesley Frank Craven, "The Earl of Warwick, A Speculator in Piracy", *Hispanic-American Quarterly Review* 10 (1930): 457-479; Nelson P. Bard, ed. "The Earl of Warwick's Voyage of 1627", *Naval Records Society Publications* 125 (1984): 15-93.

3 Craven, "The Earl of Warwick", 461.



king.<sup>1</sup>

Warwick served as President of the Council for New England in the 1620s, but also had more personal ties with the region. He had been a patron and protector of future Massachusetts minister and agent Hugh Peter.<sup>2</sup> One of Warwick's closest political allies was Sir Thomas Barrington, sponsor of a number of ministers who ultimately travelled to New England, including Ezekiel Rogers. In July 1643, the crew of one of his ships incurred the displeasure of the Bay authorities by brawling during a visit to Boston. The normally severe magistrates decided to reserve the fines imposed to be at Warwick's disposal, since he "had always been forward to do good" to Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup> The following year a Parliamentary ship, carrying a commission from Warwick, seized a Bristol merchant ship in Massachusetts Bay, much to the consternation of the colony magistrates, who were nervous about the extension of England's troubles to their own jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup>

Warwick never became entangled in the controversies raised by New England agents, and rather maintained a detachment which befitted his executive position as Governor-in-Chief. His actions indicate a commitment to stability and order which stood well above individual causes and disputes. There is also evidence that Warwick

1 Warwick's activities with the navy are noted in Stephen J. Greenberg, "Seizing the Fleet in 1642: Parliament, the Navy and the Printing Press." *Mariner's Mirror* 77 (1991): 227-234; see also C.V. Wedgwood, *The King's War*, (1974), 105.

2 Warwick presented Peter to the curate at Rayleigh, Essex, in 1623. See Pacy, "Spiritual Combat", 19; for a wider view of the Earl's patronage see Barbara Donagan, "The Clerical Patronage of Robert Rich, Second Earl of Warwick, 1619-1642", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 120 (1976): 388-419.

3 Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 151-152.

4 Bristol was in Royalist hands at the time, and it was generally held that ships from such ports should be seized by Parliamentary ships. See George L. Beer, *The Origins of the British Colonial System 1578-1660*, 353.

held doubts about the viability of the northern colonies, and that he was uneasy about the Bay Colony's practices of civil and church government. The elder John Winthrop responded to a series of questions from Warwick in 1644, and emphasised the fertility of the region's soil and the generally healthy climate, as well as painting a rosy picture of the stability created by the Massachusetts government.<sup>1</sup> Winthrop clearly sensed that Warwick was troubled about the future of the New England settlements, and tried to reassure him.

Warwick and some of his colleagues continued to have doubts about Massachusetts. Two other prominent peers demonstrate the problems faced by agents approaching Commission members from the upper house. Viscount Saye and Sele was a long-standing investor in colonising schemes and worked closely with reforming MPs until he became alarmed by the increasing radicalism of the New Model Army. His fellow peer, the Earl of Manchester, had similar doubts from an even earlier date: his long running dispute with his junior officer, Oliver Cromwell, is symptomatic of the divisions within the Parliamentary army over the prosecution of the civil war.

There was a social gap between the peers who financed and sponsored the American expeditions and the commoners who left England as the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1630, to say nothing of the similar gap which existed between those same peers and many of the more radical parliamentarians and soldiers. Over time, this contributed to disagreements between the leaders of Massachusetts and England over the purpose of the northern colonies. The absence of aristocratic involvement in the Massachusetts enterprise, and the reluctance of the settlers to allow the establishment of such a social system in New England, was a point of contention between Lord Saye and Bay Colony Governor Winthrop. In 1640, Saye warned Winthrop of the dangers,

<sup>1</sup> See Winthrop to Warwick, ca. September 1644, in *Winthrop Papers* IV: 491-493.

as he saw them, of a society which lacked the balancing influences of hereditary leadership.<sup>1</sup>

The perils of excessive democracy, which seemed to Lord Saye to threaten the stability of the colonies, were soon to be visited on England as well. The gradually widening divide between the more radical members of the House of Commons and the conservative members of both houses is reflected in the activities of the Warwick Commission, particularly as the decade reached its political climax in 1648/9. Such strains, and especially those involving the Lords, had been visible for some time, with a vocal minority in the Commons expressing doubts about the loyalty of the peers to the Parliamentary cause.

Nonetheless, despite looming difficulties as the decade drew to a close, the Lords remained active members of the Warwick Commission from Roger Williams' plea for a Rhode Island patent in 1644 to the last surviving Commission decree in June 1648. Numerically, the peers maintained their proportionate influence in the Commission, despite the decline in the number of peers who played an active role in Parliament in 1647 and 1648.<sup>2</sup> Comprising just under one-third of the total Commission membership, peers either maintained or exceeded that percentage of the signatures on Commission documents throughout. The last surviving Warwick Commission document, addressed to New Haven in June 1648, was signed

1 Lord Saye and Sele to John Winthrop, 9 July 1640, in *Winthrop Papers*, IV: 263-267.

2 Part of Mark Kishlansky's thesis, mentioned in Chapter 1 above, is that only about a dozen peers were active in the Parliamentary cause by 1647, and less still by the following year. However, in colonial affairs at least, those who remained had influence beyond their numbers. See Kishlansky, "Saye No More", *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991): 401-2.



exclusively by members of the Upper House.<sup>1</sup> In that summer of renewed warfare and the final failure of all attempts to bring Charles I back to some kind of constitutional rule, it is surprising that anyone found time to issue declarations about colonial affairs, but also significant that the Lords saw the colonies as an area in which they could still act.

The New Haven letter developed further the point made by the Commission in dealing with the later stages of the Gorton/Winslow dispute. The Lords emphasised that they would hear no further petitions from factious subjects in the New England colonies. This reinforces the opinions expressed by both Saye and Warwick in previous years that the New England experiment had singularly failed to contribute anything to the well-being of the English nation. The main concern of the Warwick Commission in rejecting the Remonstrants' petition was not a theological objection to Presbyterianism, or any political affinity with factions across the ocean. Instead, the Commission's stance was decided by the belief of the leading peers that the New England settlers should stop wasting time on internecine bickering and their obsession with the qualifications of church members and devote more energy to economic development. The Lords feared that the venture which might have been the flagship of the English expansion had become an embarrassing ship of fools.

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The Warwick Commission did not survive the revolution of 1648/9, not least because the abolition of the House of

1 It was planned to send this letter to all the New England colonies, but its receipt was only ever acknowledged by New Haven, at the General Court on 2 November 1648. See *NH Rec I*: 414. The text is included in a document entitled "New Haven's Case Stated", with a signature list, in *NH Rec II*: 520. A draft appears with other Warwick Commission papers in British Library, Sloane MSS 184: f123.



Lords removed its chairman from office and forced a general reassessment of how colonial questions should be addressed by the new executive. The Commonwealth years from 1649-53 saw some innovations in colonial administration, and also some logical development of older mechanisms. One continuing factor was the use of committees to receive agents and hear their petitions, and it is necessary once again to consider the range of bodies and individuals faced by agents.

The Commonwealth committees presented agents with dangerous challenges. Not only were the members sometimes well informed about the affairs of the colonies, they were also willing to apply their new-found authority to colonial affairs while paying less regard to the constitutional precedents so fondly observed by the Warwick Commission. Agents had to pay far more attention to the varying interests of the Commonwealth leaders than they had to the Parliamentary factions of the 1640s, but it is also true that the innovative potential of the Commonwealth had less effect on New England than it might have. When Cromwell dissolved the Rump Parliament in 1653, the authority of Massachusetts remained intact, and Rhode Islanders' missions to the Council of State caused considerable upheaval without moving the colony beyond the point reached by the 1644 patent.

The new executive Council of State passed colonial questions, and indeed much of its other business, to a range of different committees. Turnover in personnel was potentially significant: the Council of State changed half of its membership every year, and rotated its presidency on a monthly basis in an attempt to avoid the dominance of any one figure.<sup>1</sup> Some committees, in turn, were very large, with an equally confusing range of membership. The nomenclature of committees can also lead to peculiarities. The most extreme example is the

1 The administrative forms of the Commonwealth Council of State are described in Gerald Aylmer, *The State's Servants*, (1973), 17-24.

Committee for Scotch and Irish Affairs. Between 1651 and 1653, a number of petitions from Barbados and Newfoundland were passed to this body, which gradually developed its remit until it handled far wider questions of military and fiscal policy than its name suggests.<sup>1</sup> Other colonial questions were heard by the Admiralty Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee, a number of temporary committees, and indeed by the full Council.

Fortunately for agents and historians alike, rival New England representatives were only involved in two major clashes in the Commonwealth period, and considerable evidence survives of the workings of the two committees concerned. Both cases centred on the legal status and governmental structure of the Rhode Island towns. In the spring of 1650, the Admiralty Committee considered William Coddington's claim to be governor of the islands of Aquidneck and Conanicut, and the counter-claim by Edward Winslow, who argued that the territory in question belonged to Plymouth colony. Winslow also had dealings with this committee a few months later when he petitioned against the Commonwealth's decision to ban trade with the royalist colonies. Two years later, in May 1652, the Foreign Affairs Committee began hearing the appeal of Roger Williams and John Clarke against Coddington's governorship, again receiving arguments from Winslow.

Surviving records, which include detailed minute books, make it possible to determine which of the often numerous committee members actually attended meetings, and the wide array of possible candidates can therefore be reduced to a far shorter list of those men who

<sup>1</sup> Examples of colonial matters discussed before this committee are in PRO, Interregnum Entry Book LI: 20, LVI: 68, XCVII: 145. Aylmer describes this body as a "general military-cum-finance committee". See Aylmer, *State's Servants*, 15.

actually dealt with agents' petitions.<sup>1</sup> Such records provide a more reliable measure of individual involvement than the signatures of the Warwick Commission members. Nonetheless, evidence from correspondence indicates that not all of the committees' work was recorded in the minutes, and that agents benefited from less public manoeuvres also.

The Commonwealth committees inherited many members from the Commons contingent on the Warwick Commission. If the leading peers had despaired of the antics of the New England colonists by the end of the 1640s, junior members of the Commission were more positive. For many of them, the Long Parliament and its committees represented their first experience of powerful office. In particular, the Warwick Commission was the first colonial committee of any English government which had a major input from members of the House of Commons. These men were often closer to the agents, in terms of social background and experience, than were the Lords. Members of the lower house were more likely to have personal and family ties with New England's leaders. Some MPs had been members of colonising companies, and many of the gentry had considered emigrating to New England at some point in the 1630s. Two commissioners had actually spent some time in New England, and were the first members of an English colonial committee to have done so.<sup>2</sup>

These commoners came into their own after the establishment of the Commonwealth and the accompanying abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. Members of the lower house provided the only continuity of contact for the agencies of the mid-1640s and those of the Commonwealth period. The on-going presence in high

1 The minutes from both committees for the periods concerned are held at the PRO, Chancery Lane. Most minutes relating to colonial affairs are calendared in *CSPC*, 1574-1660, but the signatures on individual orders and the attendance lists are only found in the original manuscripts. See Appendix 3, below.

2 Sir Henry Vane, jr. and George Fenwick.



office of the same men was of great significance for agents whose careers spread over this period, as much for the maintenance of good contacts as for the problem of avoiding those of a more hostile nature.

Continuity in office holding is especially notable in colonial affairs because a much larger proportion of the Warwick Commission remained in government after 1649 than was the average for the Long Parliament as a whole. Of the twenty-three commissioners from the House of Commons still alive at the end of 1648, sixteen stayed on to sit in the Rump Parliament. This figure (70%) compares with 42% of the total membership of the House of Commons which eventually found its way into the Rump.<sup>1</sup> If members are categorised according to the speed with which they pledged their allegiance to the purged parliament, eight out of twenty-three (35%) were quick to support the new order, which is well above the 15% of all MPs who did.<sup>2</sup> These men were active in practice as well as being committed in theory: ten of the sixteen Warwick Commissioners who served in the Rump were in the top 16% of attenders.<sup>3</sup> While such figures must always be treated with some measure of caution, the differences here are of

1 Brunton and Pennington, *Members of the Long Parliament*, 41.

2 These figures follow David Underdown's analysis of the behaviour of MPs during and immediately after Pride's Purge. Looking beyond the Purge, it is clear that positions taken over the King's trial do not necessarily dictate the thoughts and activities of men in later years. Sir Henry Vane, Cornelius Holland and Dennis Bond, for example, all had clear misgivings about the Purge and the trial of Charles I, but later became some of the most prominent figures in the new Commonwealth. If anything, therefore, these statistics are an underestimate. See Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, 209-220 and Appendix A.

3 This figure is derived from the calculations in Worden, *The Rump Parliament*, Appendix A. Worden assigns six grades of activity to members of the Rump, and 32 of the 205 Rumpers fall into the top two grades, described as "almost full-time politicians". The ten former Warwick Commissioners in this category were Allen, Bond, Corbet, Haselrig, Holland, Mildmay, Prideaux, Purefoy, Salway and Vane.



such magnitude that it is clear that Warwick Commission members were far more likely than average to remain active in politics after Pride's Purge.

The importance of individuals is demonstrated by the two examples of New England agents in conflict before Commonwealth committees. These cases are different in character, both from each other and from the Warwick Commission proceedings. In the first, there is no evidence of the Admiralty Committee being split between opposing groups, while in the second external political questions had a clear influence on the proceedings and thinking of the Foreign Affairs Committee. In both cases, committee members supported individual agents who were their friends or like-thinkers in religious and political questions, and personal links hold considerable weight in assessing the relations between agents and the Commonwealth.

Proceedings before the Admiralty Committee in 1650 exemplify both the continuity and the change faced by agents in their dealings with the English government. William Coddington's claim to control over Aquidneck and the counter-arguments of United Colonies agent Winslow are mentioned in the minutes of eight committee meetings. Two members of the committee stand out as being most involved in the case. Valentine Walton and Sir Henry Vane each attended seven of these meetings, including the crucial meeting at which the decision was taken to report in Coddington's favour to the Council of State. None of the other committee members managed more than two appearances in the same period.<sup>1</sup>

Walton and Vane were therefore the two men who had most influence in the Coddington/Winslow case. Vane's continued presence in powerful office offered encouragement to William Coddington. Both Vane and the Newport leader had sympathised with Anne Hutchinson during the Antinomian crisis in Massachusetts, when Vane

1 For membership information, including tabulated attendance records, see Appendix 3 below.

was Governor of the Bay Colony.<sup>1</sup> Valentine Walton, on the other hand, was one of the new men to emerge from the English revolution. Walton was the first and the last of his family to serve in the House of Commons, gaining prominence in the 1640s through the army of the Eastern Association. He took a full part in the trial of Charles I, going on to sign the royal death warrant. Walton was a committed republican, and left office with the advent of the Protectorate.<sup>2</sup> He was at the peak of his political career under the Commonwealth, and served on the Admiralty Committee as a man dedicated to the advancement of the English republic, rather than as an expert in naval or colonial affairs.

Walton and Vane dominated all the dealings of the Admiralty Committee, and not just the colonial questions. The Committee was always a small body, having only three members when originally formed. Between 14 March and 11 April 1650, when Coddington's case was heard, a total of nine individuals attended at least one meeting, but only very rarely was the quorum of three exceeded in any given meeting. When hearing the arguments over Coddington's petition, Vane could afford to indulge his old acquaintance, hoping that Coddington's actions would help to formalise government in the Narragansett region.<sup>3</sup> Walton, while not a man to be easily led, had no grounds for objection to the case. In addition, both men knew that recognising Coddington placed the latter in debt to

1 Emery Battis divides Hutchinson's supporters and sympathisers into three groups of varying commitment, placing both Coddington and Vane in the most involved 'core' group. See Battis, *Saints and Sectaries*, Appendix II.

2 Walton also demonstrates the danger of assuming that personal and family ties are bound to be of primary importance: he refused to participate in Cromwell's government despite being married to the Protector's sister, Margaret.

3 Coddington's contact with Vane in England is revealed in Coddington to John Winthrop, jr., 19 February 1652, *MHS Collections*, 4th series 7: 281.

the new regime, and securing the support of as many branches of English society as possible was as much a priority for the Commonwealth as for any other revolutionary government.

Coddington's case may also have been helped by the appearance of Massachusetts agent Edward Winslow, who argued that Aquidneck should in fact be part of Plymouth colony. Exactly what the committee thought of Winslow's petition is unknown, but Vane was to treat Winslow unsympathetically in October 1650, and it is reasonable to assume that a similar attitude had prevailed in the spring. In the autumn, Winslow was petitioning for leave to trade with the royalist colonies, and Vane criticised the United Colonies for not giving full support to the new English government. Winslow himself believed that Massachusetts should be more positive toward the Commonwealth, but Vane naturally enough placed more weight on the colony's actions than on its agent's opinions.<sup>1</sup>

By the time it became clear that not all Rhode Islanders supported Coddington, England's colonial administration presented a rather different face to agents. The Foreign Affairs Committee, which dealt with the second New England case in 1652, was a far larger body than the Admiralty Committee, and presented agents with a wider range of contacts. Many members had previously heard Edward Winslow during the 1646/7 Warwick Commission hearings, and some had even dealt with Roger Williams' petition for a colony patent in 1644. Such continuity of personnel should not imply a similar maintenance of alliances and friendships, either between agents and committee members or within the ranks of the English leadership. In the summer of 1652, the Foreign Affairs Committee had clearly identifiable factions,

<sup>1</sup> The meeting on 28 October 1650 is minuted in Rawlinson MSS, A225, f7. For an account of the dispute between Winslow and Vane, see Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay*, ed. Lawrence S. Mayo (1936), I: 148-150.

particularly in relation to leading issues such as the first Anglo-Dutch war. Agents made use of these divisions to further their claims, and the Rhode Islanders John Clarke and Roger Williams in particular took pragmatic advantage of individual leaders' favoured causes.

The seemingly ubiquitous Henry Vane was a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Valentine Walton provided another link with the first round of the Coddington case. William Purefoy had signed all four of the 1646/7 Warwick Commission orders and other former members of the Commission sitting on the Foreign Affairs Committee included Sir Arthur Haselrig and Vane's close supporter Cornelius Holland. Sir William Masham, however, was new to the administration of colonial affairs, as were Herbert Morley, Thomas Scott, Henry Marten and Henry Neville. Importantly, though, Masham was no stranger to Roger Williams, having appointed the young preacher to be chaplain to his household in 1630.<sup>1</sup> While not directly involved in the colonising companies of the 1620s, Masham was well connected with those who were. The son of a London merchant who bought rather than inherited his estates, Masham married into the Barrington family and benefited from the political sponsorship of the Earl of Warwick. As such, he stands out as one of the last of the older gentry in colonial administration; he would have fitted the mould rather better as a member of the Warwick Commission than as a Commonwealth committee-man.

Thomas Scott was, like Valentine Walton, a man who rose to prominence as a result of the civil war, and dedicated himself to the new republic, refusing to serve Cromwell after 1653. A supreme organiser, Scott was one of five men who nominated the Council of State in 1649, and is perhaps best known for his work as head of the

<sup>1</sup> Masham's opinion of Williams was often ambivalent. When the preacher fell into dispute with Massachusetts, Masham wrote of Williams' "integrity and good intentions", but conceded that he was also "passionate and precipitate". See Masham to John Winthrop, sr. 29 March 1636, in *Winthrop Papers*, III: 241.



republic's intelligence gathering network. Thomas Challoner and Henry Marten had been political allies since the mid-1640s, and both brought a general interest in trade and commerce to their activities in the Foreign Affairs committee, as well as a passionate commitment to the republic. Marten in particular was a vocal republican early in the 1640s and long before such ideas had any great following in Parliament.

If Roger Williams could rely on personal links with individual committee members, so could Edward Winslow, and various members can be clearly placed in one camp or the other. More importantly, Winslow's leading supporter on the committee was Sir Arthur Haselrig, who was increasingly out of sympathy with his former ally Henry Vane. Winslow gained Haselrig's support through the latter's son-in-law, former Connecticut settler George Fenwick. Worse still for Williams was Vane's absence from London in the summer of 1652, a time when Rhode Island badly needed a speedy result.<sup>1</sup>

In the face of these obstacles, the Rhode Island agents owed their success in having Coddington's governorship suspended to two factors. First was the role of Williams' own friends and supporters. Cornelius Holland was able to postpone proceedings for most of the summer until Henry Vane returned to the Committee. Both Holland and Vane, as well as Sir William Masham, attended the meeting on 1 October which criticised Coddington and gave implicit approval for a revival of the 1644 patent. Holland's role was crucial, and while he lacked Vane's political weight, he nonetheless emerges as one of Williams' most reliable supporters in England.<sup>2</sup> In 1652, Holland wrote a letter at Williams' request to the

1 Vane's movements in this period are described in Violet Rowe, *Sir Henry Vane the Younger* (1970), 146-7.

2 Holland was a leading signatory to an earlier letter sent to Massachusetts by twelve Parliamentarians, urging the Bay to adopt a conciliatory attitude toward the Rhode Islanders. Holland et.al. to Massachusetts General Court, 1644, in Winthrop, *Journal*, II: 198.

Providence authorities, urging that the colonists carry on their government "with a peaceable condescending and unanimous spirit", and warning against factionalism and feuding in the colony.<sup>1</sup> Williams revived the tactic of having leading Englishmen write letters to his quarrelsome fellow colonists a year later, when he persuaded Vane to write a stinging letter to Providence, berating the settlers for their in-fighting.<sup>2</sup>

The support of these men alone was not sufficient to overcome the challenge from Winslow and his supporters, largely because Henry Vane did not dominate the Foreign Affairs Committee as he had the Admiralty Committee two years before. In May 1652, however, just as Williams and Clarke were presenting their petition to the authorities, England embarked on a naval war with the Dutch. The agents took advantage of the fact that some of the most regularly attending members of the Foreign Affairs Committee during the late summer and early autumn were keen supporters of the war, and stressed the Dutch dimension to Rhode Island's troubles. One of William Coddington's most serious offences in the eyes of his neighbours had been to solicit support from Peter Stuyvesant of New Amsterdam, and the agents emphasised the vulnerability of a disunited colony in the face of Dutch intervention.

The opportunity to extend the Dutch war to a new theatre was not lost on those committee members most involved in the prosecution of the conflict.<sup>3</sup> Neville, Morley, Scott and Challoner, among the most active supporters of the conflict, attended the 1 October meeting. Their recommendation to the Council of State, which was approved the following day, ordered the

1 Holland to Providence Plantations, 3 October 1652, in RIHS, Rhode Island Historical Manuscripts, V: 2.

2 Vane to Town of Providence, 8 February 1654, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 389-390.

3 For those members most in favour of the war, see Worden, *The Rump Parliament*, 301-303.

colonists to seize Dutch shipping and generally harass the settlement at New Amsterdam, in addition to condemning Coddington.<sup>1</sup>

The Commonwealth Committees discovered to their cost that altering the foundations of colonial authority could have unpredictable results. Coddington's governorship, far from being a force for order in Rhode Island, provoked a political storm and even led to sporadic violence. Although the Foreign Affairs Committee did not survive to see it, the document which ordered Rhode Islanders to attack Dutch shipping also caused controversy and yet another round of inter-colony disputes. The activities of New England agents in the early 1650s demonstrate the problems faced by any regime which attempted to take strong action at transatlantic distances.

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Little New England business was heard in London during the Protectorate, or during the abortive attempt to restore the Rump Parliament after the fall of Richard Cromwell. There were two reasons for this hiatus. First, the most serious inter- and intra-colonial disputes which had been so common in the 1640s had been solved (albeit temporarily) by the first wave of agency missions. The Rhode Island towns had survived pressure from their neighbouring colonies and also William Coddington's abortive coup. Although colony agents had yet to secure confirmation of the 1644 patent obtained from the Warwick Commission, they had at least forced the overthrow of Coddington's Governorship and fought off a challenge from New Plymouth. Even before this, in the late 1640s, most of the people in the first generation of Massachusetts settlers who disliked that colony's government had either left or been banished. The next, and bloodiest, phase of

1 The Council of State's order is printed in Richard LeB. Bowen, *The Providence Oath of Allegiance*, (1643), 40.

persecution in the Bay would come later in the 1650s with the arrival of Quaker agitators: until then, Massachusetts was relatively free from criticism. There was therefore a down-turn in agency activity immediately prior to the coming of the Protectorate, regardless of the changing government in England.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the reduction in the number of New England agents working in England coincided with another period during which England's leaders lost interest in the northern colonies. Oliver Cromwell believed that New Englanders would serve the English nation better by moving south to the Caribbean, and emphasised the point by offering Massachusetts agent John Leveret the governorship of Hispaniola.<sup>2</sup> New administrative structures focussed on the island colonies, with the formation, on 15 July 1656, of a committee to oversee the affairs of Jamaica and the West Indies. The island colonies offered potentially lucrative cash-crop revenues, and Cromwell himself saw the region in terms of a wider conflict with Catholic Spain.<sup>3</sup> The plantations committee also considered issues relating to the southern mainland colonies and to New England on occasion, but it was primarily concerned with the islands. Historians have identified two leading

1 John Leveret was the only agent to be commissioned during Cromwell's Protectorate. Rhode Island's John Clarke continued to represent the Rhode Island towns throughout the decade but was largely inactive between 1655 and the Restoration.

2 Leveret turned down the offer. His career demonstrates that he was rarely afraid of a challenge, but in this case he probably shared the general view of New Englanders that the Caribbean was a disease-ridden graveyard for the English. See M. Halsey Thomas, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Sewall 1674-1729*, 2 vols, (1973), vol 1, 259.

3 The bias toward the Caribbean in Cromwellian colonial policy is discussed in Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*, ch. 3; John F. Battick, "A New Interpretation of Cromwell's Western Design." *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 34 (1972): 76-84; Karen O. Kupperman, "Errand to the Indies: Puritan Colonisation from Providence Island through the Western Design." *WMQ* (1988): 70-99.



merchants, Martin Noell and Thomas Povey, as the most influential members of the committee. From the point of view of the present study it is sufficient to stress that the New England colonies played only a minor role in what was a major alteration in the personnel and priorities of colonial administration.<sup>1</sup>

The Protectorate's tardiness when dealing with New England delayed confirmation of Rhode Island's authority until 1655, when John Clarke finally secured an explicit order to revive the 1644 patent. In 1653 Roger Williams, anticipating the end of the Rump Parliament, had hoped for a sympathetic hearing from whatever body replaced it. He also noted, however, that despite the Council of State's positive decision in October 1652, opposing agent Winslow and his supporters were still agitating for the dismemberment of Rhode Island. Williams, by his own account keen to return to his family, may have exaggerated the strength of the forces standing against him: Winslow, Arthur Hesilrig and George Fenwick had gathered "all the friends they can make in parliament and council, and all the priests both Presbyterian and Independent."<sup>2</sup>

Williams' hope that a new government would take the initiative in ordering Rhode Island's authority was soon dashed. Cromwell's regime had even less inclination to alter the affairs of the northern colonies than had the Warwick Commission. Williams himself returned to America leaving Clarke to continue to press for action. Williams may have left England in part because his friend Henry Vane fell from office at the beginning of the Protectorate: for the first time in a decade, Rhode Island's closest English ally was in no position to help the colony. In 1653, and again two years later, Cromwell postponed decisions about Rhode Island's constitutional

1 Andrews, *British Committees*, 46-7. Povey's work is reassessed in Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*, 66-72.

2 Williams to towns of Providence and Warwick [Shawomet], 1 April 1653 in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 386.

position, noting that other "great and weighty affairs" had a higher priority.<sup>1</sup>

There is no evidence of any lobbying of committees by John Clarke, and Rhode Island's campaign for a final confirmation of the 1644 patent was conducted directly between agent and colony on one hand, and Cromwell on the other. Exactly what arguments were used is a matter for speculation, but the decisions themselves imply that Clarke and his colony won their case by a policy of regular petitioning and complaining. In 1655, Cromwell took the easiest option available and formalised the 1644 patent until further notice. Upon receipt of this instruction, the colonists celebrated by sending a young New England deer as a personal gift to the Protector. This gesture may appear somewhat trivial, but it was entirely in keeping with Rhode Island's general approach to English governments. The Narragansett communities were always careful to maintain ties with helpful individuals, and express the appropriate gratitude when the situation demanded.<sup>2</sup>

The other New England colonies were able to ignore the Protectorate. Massachusetts realised that Cromwell was not about to invest time and effort in interfering with Bay Colony affairs. The Bay was in confident mood in the later 1650s with regard to England, and its selection of John Leveret as agent in 1655 was a symptom of that feeling. Boston's contact with the English government during Leveret's agency never touched upon constitutional matters, and the agent's most serious task was to promote New England as a supplier of naval provisions for the Caribbean expeditions.

1 Order of the Protector, in *Thurloe State Papers*, II: 1-2; Cromwell to Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 29 March 1655, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 437.

2 The deer incident is described in Roy Sherwood, *The Court of Oliver Cromwell*, (1989), 55; also *CSPD*, 1655: 553, 556, 567.

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The story of agents' contact with colonial administrators during the interregnum is one of differing perceptions and priorities. Agents who wanted radical action from the English authorities had to compete against their opponents and also against the precedent-bound inertia of successive regimes, which were in turn unsure of their own status. England's leaders repeatedly took the least painful option when faced with competing agents. They approved petitions which seemed to offer little threat to the existing situation, rather than devote time and effort to in-depth assessments of colonial questions which were in any case happening in an increasingly irrelevant corner of the English Atlantic.

## Restoration Missions: The Consolidation of Authority

This chapter considers the impact of the various New England voices to be heard in England in the early sixteen-sixties, and contrasts the successes and failures of the region's interests. The Restoration court attracted a wide range of people who hoped to profit in some way from declaring their support for the new regime, and Charles II was never so secure on his throne that he could spurn declarations of allegiance. In the colonies, as in England, there were old scores to settle, and plenty of men willing to take the places of those who failed to make the transition to life under the restored monarchy. Colony agents had to deal with such dangerous third parties as well as perform their more predictable duties. The work of the Restoration agents demonstrates further the problems facing the first colonial generation, and also reveals the gradual way in which the agency matured and adapted to changing circumstances.

The first priority of the restored monarchy was the consolidation of its authority, first in England, but also in the overseas plantations. The Royalist settlers of the Chesapeake offered Charles an obvious first step on the road to securing all his father's dominions, but it also emerged, doubtless to the surprise of the new king, that this aim was shared by the smaller New England colonies. Rhode Island and Connecticut agents took advantage of Charles' need for recognition and gained a mutually beneficial strengthening of their colonial charters. At the same time, the tougher problem of Massachusetts was forced onto the English agenda by the complaints of dissidents and critics, as well as agents from the smaller colonies.



Massachusetts tried to hold on to the past in its dealings with the restored monarchy, believing that the assistance of old colonial sponsors and the well-proven use of delaying tactics might dissuade Charles from interfering. In particular, Massachusetts sought to avoid sending agents, and began a long process of directing respectful but vague letters to senior officials and to the king himself. Rhode Island and Connecticut were much bolder in securing their objectives, and also, however inadvertently, persuaded the English government that Massachusetts could be isolated even within New England. It was to push home this advantage that England took the initiative in the middle of the decade and dispatched a group of investigating commissioners to the region.

The major events of the 1660s as far as New England is concerned fall therefore into three acts, and this chapter treats them in turn. First, the success of various forces in bringing the northern colonies to the attention of an English government which had other priorities, and the initial efforts of Massachusetts to avoid such attention. Second, the often complicated means by which Rhode Island and Connecticut agents secured their new charters. Finally, the arrival of the king's commissioners, while it did not open a new chapter in transatlantic relations, certainly increased the stakes in some older disagreements. Taken together, the Restoration agencies demonstrate that 1660 was not a dramatic turning point in colonial affairs, but rather the latest in a series of moments at which agents, colonies and English leaders had to take stock of their relative positions and make adjustments accordingly.

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The new royal government which took power in England in 1660 was different from the successive regimes of the interregnum in that the basis of its authority was instantly recognisable, and was not questioned by any

major political or social group. While Parliament, Commonwealth and Protectorate had faced doubts about the legitimacy of their government without a king, Charles II claimed his right to rule by virtue of long-established precedent: hereditary monarchy was not exactly unfamiliar to the English.

This is not to say that Charles could afford to be complacent about establishing his authority. Much effort was expended in the early months and years of the Restoration on consolidating the king's power throughout his extended dominions. While England itself was inevitably the first priority, the American colonies were never far from mind, and offered important political and economic prizes to the new regime.

Charles and his court were already taking steps to re-establish royal authority in America by the summer of 1660, within weeks of his triumphant return to London. It is indicative of the priorities of the king's advisers in colonial matters that initial attention was devoted entirely to the southern and Caribbean colonies. In part, this move was due to administrative expediency, in that precedent existed for the appointment of governors to these colonies. In the case of Virginia, William Berkeley had already been Governor for almost two decades at the time of the Restoration. He was originally commissioned by Charles I in 1641 and sought a second commission from the exiled 'Charles II' in 1650: it was therefore no great radical act for the formally crowned Charles II to re-commission the loyal Berkeley once more in July 1660.<sup>1</sup> The authority of Lord Willoughby of Parham, originally ordered by Charles to take over the government of Barbadoes in 1650, was similarly revived.<sup>2</sup> In Jamaica, Charles did not have any obvious individual to appoint, but the island had been governed by military officers

1 See *CSPC*, 1574-1660, 485.

2 See *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, I: 212; *CSPC*, 1574-1660, 483.

chosen by Cromwell from the time of the English occupation in 1655, and the new king simply made his own appointments in the same manner from the ranks of the Royalist military.<sup>1</sup>

Royal government was not universally welcomed in the southern and island settlements, and these simple administrative actions of Charles II could not ensure that control was established immediately and without any difficulty. Nonetheless, the new regime was able to draw on recent cases in which central authority had been applied to these colonies. The priority of any new government which takes power after a period of unrest is to attain stability and legitimacy as quickly as possible, and Charles was able to exert influence across a large part of his colonial possessions by following available precedents.

New England posed different problems. The new regime in London had good reason to believe that the region had collaborated with successive Parliamentary regimes. While Charles might have been surprised to discover just how little practical support had in fact been forthcoming, it is also true that there was never a Royalist party in New England of the kind found in, for example, Virginia. In addition, two individuals with Massachusetts connections- Hugh Peter and Sir Henry Vane- were among the few interregnum leaders considered guilty enough to be executed after the Restoration. Neither man could by any reasonable measure be seen as representative of the colonial leadership, but it has already been demonstrated that English critics were never slow to stereotype the northern settlements.

Despite this generally negative image, Massachusetts did have some cards to play which gave the new regime reason to hesitate. Most importantly, the colony had a valid charter issued by Charles I. While London could instigate court proceedings for the recall of that

<sup>1</sup> See Colonel Edward D'Oyley's commission as Governor of Jamaica, February 8 1661, in *CSPC*, 1661-1668, 7-8.

charter, the failure of the previous attempt to do that in the sixteen-thirties indicated that such a course might be expensive in time and effort. Massachusetts had shown itself quite willing to ignore royal instructions during the incident, assuming that the English government lacked both the will and the naval capability to enforce orders at transatlantic distances. Charles II was therefore faced with the problem of what he would do if Massachusetts refused to cooperate in any attempt to recall or revise the colony charter. A monarch trying to secure his rule could ill afford to provoke a confrontation which he was not certain of winning easily.

As well as political constraints, there were sound economic reasons for giving New England a low priority. If Charles was to increase and exploit income from the colonies, it made sense for him to concentrate on those settlements which had proven value in their cash crops. Leading members of the committees set up by the new regime to examine colonial affairs shared this assumption, and paid little attention to New England. Early in 1661, the Council for Foreign Plantations ordered a sub-committee to "inform themselves of the true state" of Jamaica and New England. Perhaps understandably, the group reported (after only three weeks) that it had been unable to gain enough information about the latter region, but that it could nonetheless comment on affairs in Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> The Jamaica report was compiled and submitted by Thomas Povey, whose name is already familiar due to his work in managing colonial trade under the Protectorate. Povey, in common with many who had developed colonial interests during the previous decade, was primarily concerned with the lucrative cash crops of the southern and island colonies.

In short, New England, and Massachusetts in particular, had few promoters left. It did, however, have no shortage of critics, both in England and among

1 See *CSPC*, 1661-1668, 1-2.



disaffected colonists and former settlers. These voices did much to force the region back on to the agenda. They also helped provide an opportunity for the restored monarchy, once it had become more established, to try to bring the last remaining part of England's dominions into line with the rest. While Charles II was in exile, it was easy to write off the northern colonies as enemies and concentrate on wooing possibly more accommodating groups and factions in England and elsewhere in America. Voices raised after the Restoration soon made it clear that New England was far from being a homogeneous region, and that the Stuarts might find friends there if they looked. Perhaps more important, various interests which fell short of outright support were at least happy to come to a mutually beneficial arrangement with the monarchy if the result was a diminution of the power of Massachusetts.

Some of the critics responsible for the background hum of criticism which surrounded all mention of Massachusetts in the early sixteen-sixties have already been mentioned. The Quakers began their onslaught in the last years of the Protectorate and continued into the following decade. Leaders of failed plantations in northern New England, who had suffered economically at the hands of Massachusetts during the years of relative neglect by England, saw the restored monarchy as a possible saviour. Perhaps most importantly, agents from Rhode Island and Connecticut competed with each other and with other interested colonial parties for charters, demonstrating once and for all that Charles and his advisers had scope for rule by division and favouritism, and therefore a means of isolating Massachusetts. Finally, Massachusetts itself was revealed to be divided, offering the king his most dangerous weapon.

As had been the case throughout the interregnum, therefore, New Englanders pushed their region into the view of English administrators who were inclined to look elsewhere. Before examining the Restoration missions in

detail, a brief survey of the administrative changes brought about by the new regime is necessary. Agents and other colonials once again had to identify important individuals in a changed political and administrative climate, and one in which the continuity of personnel visible in earlier transfers of power was less pronounced.

At first glance, the task facing agents and their colonies in the 1660s seems similar to that of Williams, Gorton and Winslow before the committees of previous decades. Indeed, Charles II continued the practice of his father and the interregnum regimes in his appointment of committees specifically to deal with colonial questions. In the last two months of 1660 both a Council of Trade and a Council for Foreign Plantations were established. The membership lists of these bodies make impressive reading: the latter had forty-nine members, many of whom had a long standing involvement in colonial affairs. Thirteen came from the revived House of Lords, including some former members of the Warwick Commission, Viscount Saye and Sele, the Earl of Manchester, and Lords Roberts and Dacre. As will be seen, the presence of these men on the Council kindled some hope among New Englanders. Other members were senior officials in the new royal administration, such as Secretaries of State Morrice and Nicholas. Younger men like Thomas Povey and Martin Noell were also included to give the benefit of their work with colonial trade during the Protectorate.<sup>1</sup>

If all the assembled merchants, aristocrats, officials and lawyers had really had a say in policy, the Restoration would have been a period of unprecedented egalitarianism in government. These royal committee-men were certainly diligent in pursuing the issues placed

1 Membership lists for Charles' new Councils of Plantations and Trade are printed in J.C. Saint y, *Officials of the Boards of Trade 1660-1870* (1974), 18-21. Proceedings of the former are minuted in PRO, CO1/15.

before them, and prepared detailed reports based on evidence from petitioners and witnesses. The experiences of colonial agents in Restoration England reveal, however, that such committees did not have executive powers to match their information gathering role.

The extensive membership list of the Council for Foreign Plantations is just one example of the shrewdness with which Charles II used his patronage. He recognised that it was quite possible to appoint men with a wide range of political and religious inclinations to apparently prestigious government positions, while keeping real power in the hands of a much smaller elite.<sup>1</sup> The Restoration colonial committees exerted minimal influence on colonial affairs. Even the reinstated Privy Council, which had its own plantations committee, rarely took major decisions of government policy.

Instead, the governance of England's colonies (and much else besides) fell to the new Lord Chancellor, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon. Clarendon dominated the royal government in the early years of the Restoration. He had been invaluable to the exiled Charles Stuart, ultimately composing the documents which eased England's return to monarchy. The Declaration of Breda came from Clarendon's pen, as did the series of letters which persuaded leading figures in Parliament and the military to accept the Restoration without a fight in the spring of 1660.<sup>2</sup> Once established in London, Charles allowed Clarendon to arrange the sprawling committees appointed in the first months of the Restoration in such a way as to keep power closely at hand. Clarendon used the Foreign Affairs Committee as an executive council dominated by himself, a handful of peers and Charles' two Secretaries

1 The nature of the Restoration settlement with reference to the New England colonies is examined in Sosin, *English America and the Restoration Monarchy of Charles II*, 27-28, ch. 5; Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*, ch. 5.

2 R.W. Harris, *Clarendon and the English Revolution*, (1983), 275.

of State, who translated policy into legislation.<sup>1</sup>

Clarendon's primary concern during his administration was the consolidation of the restored monarchy. He had no particular interest in the colonies, and his prominence in colonial administration is simply a reflection of his central role in all branches of government in the early 1660s. Unlike the leading members of the Warwick Commission or the Council of State committees, Clarendon had no investments in the colonies, nor had he any ideological and theological concerns of the kind previously trumpeted by Archbishop Laud.

Clarendon's power in the early sixteen-sixties made him readily identifiable by agents, but it also made him hard to approach: it was one thing for an agent to have regular contact with members of Parliament, but quite another to establish a rapport with Charles' most powerful counsellor. Agents had to try to find ways of reaching Clarendon through lesser officials and in this sense their task was perhaps even more complex than when they faced numerous parliamentarians and committees.

Many leading New Englanders recognised familiar faces from the past among the members of the new committees, and Massachusetts and Connecticut tried to revive some of these older contacts in an effort to gain a hearing. Perhaps predictably, though, few of those who had been influential in the sponsorship of colonies in previous decades made a full return to the political establishment after the Restoration. In any case, age was creeping up on those opposition leaders of the 1630s and 1640s who were still alive when agents arrived to petition the new king. Even men who had come to an accommodation with the Stuarts and been nominally welcomed back into the royal fold were often to be found in retirement in their country seats, far separated from the centre of power.

Nevertheless, Massachusetts and Connecticut alike

1 Percy L. Kaye, *English Colonial Administration Under Lord Clarendon 1660-1667*, (1905), 10.



considered the old aristocrats to be worth soliciting for help. While the Warwick Commission had refused to allow the Bay to take over Gorton's Shawomet settlement, and individual peers had been less than complimentary about the Bay's religious and social order, there had at least been none of the attempts at interference practised previously by Laud and subsequently by the Commonwealth. Thus, the political survival of the Earl of Manchester and Lord Saye, and their appointment to the Council for Foreign Plantations ensured that they headed the Bay Colony's list of potential contacts for its agents in 1661.

John Leveret, in the final months of his agency for Massachusetts, had taken the unauthorised step of contacting Saye and Manchester in September 1660. Saye promised to do his best to protect the colony's interests.<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts followed up this initial contact with a letter to Lord Saye which was full of biblical allusion and condemnation of the Quakers: the latter, according to the Bay leadership, had been "commissionated from hell to ruin the poor churches and people of God here."<sup>2</sup>

Most attempts to revive old contacts were quickly revealed to be hopeless. Connecticut agent John Winthrop also tried to approach Lord Saye, but the old man, courteous as he was, could remember little of his days as a sponsor of colonies. In particular, Saye had no recollection of the constitutional history of the region, which Winthrop was trying to reconstruct prior to applying for a new charter. Winthrop's associate John Richards reported to the agent that Saye could only give a few names of men likely to have been involved in the original New England expeditions: "this is all (upon much

1 Leveret to Governor Endecott, in *Hutchinson Papers*, II: 41.

2 Massachusetts to Viscount Saye, in *Hutchinson Papers* II: 78.

discourse) we could any way gather from him."<sup>1</sup> More importantly, agents were mistaken if they believed that members of the new colonial committees could have the sort of influence wielded by such bodies in the past. Even if Lord Saye had retained the energy and commitment which he demonstrated in the 1640s, his position on the Restoration committees would have been a mere shadow of his powers as a Warwick commissioner.

Massachusetts probably recognised early that attempts to gain the support of the old colonial promoters was at best a side issue, and that real efforts needed to be directed more centrally. Governor Endecott's first contact with the new regime could hardly have been more direct: by-passing all the councils and committees established in the summer of 1660, Endecott wrote directly to Charles II later that year. The letter was respectful, yet firm in its defence of the original migration from England. It also anticipated a range of complaints from other parties with interests in the region, and asked that the king should not make up his mind against Massachusetts until the colony had a chance to answer.<sup>2</sup>

Although the difference is subtle, this last request does mark a change in the Bay Colony's stance since the 1640s. Endecott's words were similar to the plea made by Edward Winslow in 1647 that colonial governments should not be forced to answer complaints against them in England. By 1660, however, the explicit claims to self-government under the charter contained in Winslow's petition had been pushed into the background. Such open belligerence might not have been tolerated by the new regime, but Endecott's restrained tone was calculated to have the same effect in the longer term.

Endecott's letter continues a much older trend in

1 Richards to Winthrop, 18 December 1661, in Winthrop MSS, reel 7. See also Lord Saye to Winthrop, 14 December 1661, in Winthrop MSS, reel 7.

2 CSPC, 1661-1668, 8-10.

the way a section of the Massachusetts leadership liked to deal with England. The elder Winthrop's correspondence with the Earl of Warwick and Lord Saye, it will be recalled, was an attempt to persuade leading English figures of the continued viability of the Bay Colony despite the economic problems of the early sixteen-forties. Even at the time of the Bay's first mission, John Endecott had believed that such delicate diplomatic tasks should not be entrusted to agents, and when he himself served as Governor two decades later he had not changed his views.

If Endecott hoped to keep transatlantic relations at the level of occasional correspondence, he was soon thwarted by the volume of petitions against Massachusetts reaching London. It was in acting as a focus for petitioners that Charles' Council for Foreign Plantations began to perform a useful information gathering role, even if it could not itself respond to agents' petitions. Complaints against Massachusetts reached the English authorities regularly in the early years of the Restoration. The Bay Colony's excursions into the Narragansett region, a major source of tension in previous decades, were now only part of the picture, and various aggrieved settlers from elsewhere in the region hoped to gain some redress by petitioning Charles II. The allegations were wide ranging and often did not restrict themselves to territorial questions. Given the English administration's self-confessed lack of information about New England, such petitions inevitably added to a growing conviction that the region needed to be investigated.

It is worth examining a few of the complaints directed against Massachusetts, because they form part of the background against which more formal agency petitions were delivered. One of the earliest petitioners was Edward Godfrey, who styled himself "sometime Governor of the Province of Maine". His criticism of Massachusetts, delivered in February 1661, was couched in terms of an attack on the Corporation for the Propagation of the

Gospel, which he saw as a 'front' for a much more invidious endeavour. The Corporation, alleged Godfrey, was a hugely wealthy body able to indulge in large land purchases in New England which had more to do with establishing a powerful and independent state in America than converting the Indians.<sup>1</sup> Others pounced on the colonies' conversion record, and in particular at the work of Hugh Peter, who was of course an easy target. According to John Giffard, who wanted to establish mines in the region, England had contributed £900 per annum "to Christianise the Indians in New England, which money found its way into private men's purses, and was a cheat of Hugh Peters."<sup>2</sup>

In March 1661 more condemnation was heaped on Massachusetts by Captain Thomas Breedon, one of the most vocal members of Boston's merchant community.<sup>3</sup> Breedon made the increasingly familiar allegation about the Bay's operation as a de facto free state, and backed it up with detailed comment about the colonial leadership's attitude toward Charles II. Most damaging was Breedon's revelation that Endecott's letter, to which the king had responded magnanimously only a month before, had been hotly debated in the colony: the General Court had argued over it for a whole week, "there being so many against owning the king or having any dependence on England." The other major issue raised by Breedon was of personal concern to the king, who had been understandably disturbed by news that two of the judges who signed his father's death warrant were being sheltered in New England. Breedon was able to provide further information, and testified that his own attempts to arrest the regicides Whalley and Goffe had been frustrated by Bay Colony officials.<sup>4</sup>

1 CSPC, 1661-1668, 12.

2 CSPC, 1661-1668, 26.

3 For Breedon, see Bailyn, *New England Merchants*, 110-111.

4 See Breedon's testimony to the Council for Foreign Plantations, 11 March 1661, in CSPC, 1661-1668, 15.



News of the growing clamour in England for something to be done about Massachusetts increased the internal tensions of the colony as 1661 progressed. Governor Endecott's control over the Bay's dealings with England declined as vocal groups of settlers feared the possible consequences of intransigence. Importantly, though, while factions and interest groups were able to insist on the dispatch of agents late in 1661, the colonial authorities retained tight control over what the agents actually did. The agents' petitions were drafted for them before they sailed, and letters of contact with English leaders also provided. The means of delivering the Bay Colony's opinions may have changed by 1661, but there was no doubt that it was Governor Endecott and his close supporters, and not the agents, who had the dominant voice.

The documents carried by Simon Bradstreet and John Norton represent a realisation on the part of the colony that new stars were in the ascendant in England. As well as delivering the letters to Lord Saye and the Earl of Manchester mentioned above, the agents carried a letter to Lord Chancellor Clarendon. Clarendon's letter was markedly different from the other two. It made no mention of the Quakers, but rather tried to appeal to Clarendon on the grounds that he, like the colonists, had experienced being exiled from home. This parallel does not stand up to much scrutiny, of course, but Massachusetts had to avoid the Quaker issue when appealing to Clarendon. Comments like those appearing in the Saye and Manchester letters might seem to be a criticism of the recent royal order forbidding further persecution of the sect.<sup>1</sup>

England's response to the Bay agents was measured, and raised various issues while maintaining a reasonable tone. The agents had presented a case which proved "very acceptable" to the king, who was impressed by their "loyalty, duty and good affection." Charles also

1 Massachusetts to Earl of Clarendon, *Hutchinson Papers* II: 80.

expressed understanding of the strains and temptations of recent times, and was willing to forgive the colony's deviation from English norms. Behind the conciliatory manner, however, there was no doubt that the Bay Colony was being served notice on a number of points of future contention. Liberty of conscience to those observing Church of England practices was necessary, as was an extension of the electorate to include all those of good estate. The latter point was of course an attack on the Bay's policy of restricting the franchise to church members.<sup>1</sup>

Charles and Clarendon left their options open regarding Massachusetts, giving the colony an opportunity to concede voluntarily but avoiding threats which might have been hard to follow up. Already, there was evidence that other New England colonies were interested in securing royal authority for their settlements. Just as the southern and Caribbean colonies had been easier to deal with than New England in 1660, it became apparent in 1661 that the smaller New England settlements were ready to accept royal charters far more readily than Massachusetts. Once more, the complex problem posed by the Bay Colony was allowed to rest for a while and attention turned to the Rhode Island and Connecticut. This case was by no means simple, but at least what conflict there was tended to be between and among the agents, rather than between agents and colonial administrators. The wider significance of the Rhode Island/Connecticut dispute was that even before the Massachusetts agents arrived in London, England's leaders had been offered, albeit indirectly, a means of undermining the Bay Colony and defeating Endecott's attempts to delay and misinform.

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles II to Massachusetts, 28 June 1662, PRO C01/16 ff168-9.

The southern New England question in the early 1660s was rather more complex than it had been two decades before. In the 1640s, Massachusetts was the main external threat faced by Rhode Island agents Williams and Gorton, and while Plymouth had claims to territory around Narragansett Bay, the most important disputes centred on the actions of the Bay Colony. Between them, Williams and Gorton secured papers from England which made overt military action by Massachusetts less likely.

By the Restoration, however, Rhode Island faced more subtle threats. The potentially lucrative Narragansett Country had been subject to increasing infiltration by members of the Atherton Company in the later 1650s. The Atherton planters bought land from local Indians and offered support to junior Indian leaders who hoped to overthrow the generation which had cooperated with Gorton and Williams in the 1640s. The second, but related, challenge to Rhode Island came from Connecticut, which avoided any direct conflict in America in favour of securing a new royal charter which would quietly incorporate the Narragansett Bay settlements into Hartford's jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup>

Rhode Islanders believed that both these threats were simply new verses to an old and familiar song. In particular, they argued with some justification that the Atherton Company's activities were thinly disguised aggression by the leaders of the United Colonies. After all, most of the company's members came from Massachusetts, and Boston was also perceived to be seeking a new approach to the Narragansett territory. The Bay had recently distanced itself from the Arnold faction in Providence, its traditional allies. William Arnold was gradually reconciled with his Rhode Island neighbours

1 Detailed accounts of Connecticut's expansionism are found in the work of the younger Winthrop's biographers. See Dunn, "John Winthrop Jr. and the Narragansett Country." *WMQ* 13 (1956): 68-86; Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, 117-142; Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 219-245.

during the later 1650s, but an important milestone was the Bay Colony's refusal to support him in 1659 when he appealed for help against the Gortonists. Arnold had bought some of the cattle seized by Massachusetts from the Gortonists in 1643, and was being sued by the Shawomet men for compensation. The Bay authorities refused to help, arguing- surprisingly but significantly- that Arnold's dispute was with "his own people".<sup>1</sup>

Roger Williams voiced the fears of his fellow settlers about the Atherton Company early in 1660. The Company's claims to the Narragansett Country had provoked a belief that "the Bay (by this purchase) designed some prejudice to the liberty of conscience amongst us."<sup>2</sup> The younger John Winthrop's place at the head of the list of planters quietened some of Williams' concerns, but Williams always had a peculiar faith in the motives and intentions of the Winthrop family.<sup>3</sup> Most Rhode Islanders saw the Connecticut Governor's involvement as increasing rather than mitigating the threat.

While many senior Atherton Company members came from Massachusetts, other investors were recruited from across New England. Second to Winthrop in political rank was magistrate Simon Bradstreet of Massachusetts. Humphrey Atherton himself was a Massachusetts deputy who had been interested in Block Island, just off the southern New England coast, since the later 1640s; John Alcock was a

1 Arnold's petition of 18 October 1659 and the Bay's response are in Mass Archives, 2: 17, 18.

2 Williams to John Winthrop, jr., 6 February 1660, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 495.

3 Williams' relationships with both the elder and younger Winthrops reveal the deferential streak in his character when dealing with his social superiors. Williams vehemently disagreed with the Winthrops in many things, and particularly the elder's attitude to religious toleration, but he always maintained a formal and subservient tone. Similar evidence from his relations with English gentry families in earlier years has led Sidney James to conclude that Williams was something of a social climber. See James, "The Worlds of Roger Williams." *Rhode Island History*, 37 (1978): 99-109.



merchant in Roxbury, Massachusetts; Richard Lord was a militia captain and merchant from Hartford, Connecticut. Ironically, the member of the company with the strongest connection to the Narragansett Country bought his first land there from Roger Williams. Richard Smith had taken over Williams' trading post at Cocumscussoc in 1651, just before the latter's second mission to England.<sup>1</sup>

The Atherton Company posed a particularly serious threat to Rhode Island because it adopted that colony's own tactics. The purchase of land from Indians had been the key element of Rhode Island's territorial claims since Roger Williams established Providence in 1636. Now, the Atherton Company claimed that it had more right to the Narragansett Country than had the Rhode Islanders, because the colony had no specific deeds for much of the disputed territory and only had title to it by virtue of Williams' 1644 patent.

Initially, the Atherton planters did not make a separate approach to England, preferring to attach their colours to John Winthrop's Connecticut agency. The Company believed that it would be allowed to retain its purchases and expand them further if Connecticut could claim jurisdiction over the Narragansett Country. Winthrop was duly furnished with every piece of evidence the planters could find which bolstered their case. Amos Richenson sent copies of all the relevant land deeds to Winthrop, and the Company even resurrected Thomas Weld's patent, which had lain forgotten in Massachusetts for

1 These men, along with fourteen others, are listed in the record of 'Assistants' of the Company in October 1660. See James Arnold, ed. *The Records of the Proprietors of the Narragansett otherwise called The Fones Record*, (1894), 12-13. For Atherton's designs on Block Island, see Roger Williams to John Winthrop, jr., 7 November 1648, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 256-7.

fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> Leading Company member Edward Hutchinson wrote to Samuel Maverick- persistent critic of the United Colonies- urging him not to voice opposition to Connecticut's charter efforts. Hutchinson was "contented with being under the government of Mr. Winthrop."<sup>2</sup>

The Atherton Company was not the only group to rely on the younger Winthrop in the early years of the Restoration. The Company's faith in Winthrop is understandable, given the coincidence of interest between the planters and Connecticut over the exploitation of the Narragansett Country. Much less explicable is the trust placed in Winthrop by the authorities in New Haven. That colony assumed that Winthrop would smooth over its lack of any English authority and come up with a workable arrangement whereby it could continue to operate as an independent settlement in cooperation with the other United Colonies. Instead, as will be seen, Winthrop negotiated the annexation of New Haven by Connecticut, thus demonstrating the harshest consequences of a failure to appreciate the seriousness of the transatlantic ties between England and the colonies, and the effect- for good or ill- of agents upon them.

The New Haven colonists were divided over their attitudes to England in the 1660s, and in particular to the restored monarchy. While they were never as factious as the Rhode Island towns, the latter could at least agree that their best hope of defence lay in appealing to England: New Haven instead tried to maintain its isolation from the home country. More seriously, even when the colony's leaders decided that the king must be

1 See two letters from Richenson to Winthrop, 24 January 1662 and 17 September 1662, in Winthrop MSS, reel 7. The former letter records that Massachusetts General Court Secretary Edward Rawson "looking over some records of the court found a patent of the Narragansett Country...which is granted as an addition to the Bay patent and bears date five months before Rhode Island patent."

2 Hutchinson to Maverick, 29 September 1662, in Winthrop MSS, reel 7.

proclaimed and a petition sent to London, they asked John Winthrop to present their regards to the court rather than hiring an agent of their own.<sup>1</sup>

Winthrop made no attempt to distinguish New Haven from Connecticut in his dealings with the English authorities. New Haven Governor William Leete had hoped that Winthrop would acquire a charter which recognised the smaller settlement as an autonomous unit within the larger colony, while minister John Davenport rejected any official connection with Connecticut at all. Winthrop pleased neither of them, petitioning for a charter which made no mention of New Haven but which clearly included that colony's land within Connecticut's new territorial limits.

Even then, New Haven's leaders failed to make a decisive break with Winthrop. They authorised three men—John Scott, Robert Thomson and Henry Halsell—to speak on their behalf in London, but ordered them not to appeal directly to the king without first approaching Winthrop.<sup>2</sup> The Connecticut agent was well able to deal with such a delegation. Winthrop persuaded New Haven's representatives that he had never intended to "meddle in already settled plantations", and that he would take all possible steps to solve any continuing disputes as soon as he returned to America.<sup>3</sup> In return, Winthrop secured a promise from Scott and his colleagues that they would "forbear giving [Winthrop] any trouble" on behalf of New Haven.<sup>4</sup>

Winthrop knew that Connecticut would retain an

1 Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, 124.

2 For the instruction to the representatives, see John Davenport to John Winthrop, jr., 22 June 1663, in Winthrop MSS, reel 7.

3 Winthrop's copy of the letter given to the representatives is dated 3 March 1663, in *MHS Collections* 5th series, 8: 80-81.

4 Scott et.al. to Winthrop, 3 March 1662[-3], in Winthrop MSS, reel 7.

advantage over New Haven as long as the issue did not come to the attention of the English authorities, and he worked hard to persuade New Haven that he could be trusted. New Haven's only hope of avoiding annexation was to appeal directly to the king, and request the recall of the new Connecticut charter. Its failure to do so stems from a false sense of security after twenty years of being part of the decision-making process in New England. As a member of the United Colonies, New Haven had a forum for solving grievances, and was used to being allied with Connecticut. New Haven was reluctant to appeal to England for a number of reasons: its attitude to the restored Stuarts is demonstrated by its granting of sanctuary to two of the men who had signed Charles I's death warrant.<sup>1</sup> Still, despite repeated evidence to the contrary, New Haven continued to believe that New England's old order would provide it with eventual redress against Connecticut.

Others had a clearer idea of the realities of transatlantic politics. With the New Haven question no longer relevant, the debate among New Englanders in Restoration London became a three-cornered affair. John Winthrop had to defend Connecticut's charter against the counter-claims of Rhode Island's John Clarke. In addition, he had to deal with the continuing presence in England of John Scott, who had learned some lessons from his attempt to represent New Haven. Scott had made a lasting impression on members of the Atherton Company during a short visit to New England early in 1662, and

1 The story of the regicides (Edward Whalley and William Goffe) in New England during the early 1660s is summarised in Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 201-4. The affair took on semi-mythical turn when Goffe apparently appeared in his old Parliamentary Army uniform to rally panicky townsfolk during Metacom's War. For the most recent thorough examination, see Douglas C. Wilson, "Web of Secrecy: Goffe, Whalley, and the Legend of Hadley." *NEQ* 60 (1987): 515-548.



was asked by them to help Winthrop in his mission.<sup>1</sup> However, Scott was also afraid that Winthrop, weary as he was of his stay in England, might compromise with Clarke and leave the Narragansett planters in an ambiguous legal position.

Scott's fears were well-founded. The negotiations between Winthrop and Clarke over their respective land claims encompass many of the features of agency work. Between them, the two agents took full advantage of the general ignorance among England's rulers of New England geography, and ultimately acquired charters under a compromise which both knew could be interpreted by either colony to its own advantage. Crucially for Rhode Island, though, the discussions between the agents came after Clarke had petitioned the crown for a colony charter. The Rhode Island agent was happy to hold talks with Winthrop, but they were primarily aimed at delaying the adoption of the Connecticut charter for as long as possible. When the agents finally compromised, their agreement hinged upon the renaming of rivers and the granting to settlers in the Narragansett Country the right to choose which colony they would join. Clearly, either colony could interpret the geographical labels as it saw fit, and try to flood the region itself with sympathetic new tenants.

John Scott believed this compromise might make life difficult for his new friends in the Atherton Company, and did what neither he nor anyone else had tried to do for New Haven the previous year. Waiting until Winthrop sailed for New England, Scott petitioned the king directly on behalf of the Atherton investors, claiming that they wished to found a new colony.<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence that the Atherton planters ever contemplated

1 See Edward Hutchinson to John Winthrop, jr., 25 December 1662, in Winthrop MSS, reel 7.

2 Scott was disarmingly frank about his activities, which included the smoothing of his petition's progress with some 'presents' to officials. See Scott to Edward Hutchinson, 29 April 1663, in Winthrop MSS, reel 7.

anything of the sort but Scott's tactics were nonetheless sound. He was granted a royal letter which instructed the United Colonies to protect Atherton and his associates from the "unreasonable and turbulent spirits of Providence Colony."<sup>1</sup> This letter did not establish the Atherton Company as an independent colony, but Scott's work did ensure that the planters had the sort of useful documentary authority which the much older entity of New Haven fatally lacked.

New Haven's failure to take charge of its own affairs in England is placed in even greater relief by the success of Rhode Island. Agent John Clarke had some difficulties early in his revived mission, and his hurried petitioning early in 1661 in the wake of Venner's rebellion has already been considered. Clarke's work may have been clumsy, and he certainly lacked the network of friends and contacts built up by Winthrop, but he succeeded in getting across the only message which mattered: Rhode Island was an established colony in a strategically useful location, which had suffered at the hands of Massachusetts.

By granting Clarke a charter, Clarendon added Rhode Island to the list of American colonies which openly proclaimed their allegiance to Charles II. This was Clarendon's primary goal, and while the details are unknown, there is evidence that he personally eased the passage of the Rhode Island charter through the English bureaucracy. The Rhode Island General Court later thanked Clarendon for assisting with the payment of costs incurred in procuring the charter.<sup>2</sup> It was of little consequence that the charters of Rhode Island and

1 Charles II to Governors and Assistants of Massachusetts, Plymouth, New Haven and Connecticut, 21 June 1663, in *MHS Collections*, 5th series 9: 54-55.

2 See *RI Rec I*: 510. Unfortunately, the Gortonists used Clarendon's action as yet another excuse for not raising money for Clarke. See Chapter 4 above, and Town of Warwick [Shawomet] to Roger Williams, 20 February 1666, (Enclosure), in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 546.

Connecticut contained territorial boundaries liable to lead to conflict, because the fundamental aim of Clarendon's colonial policy had been achieved.

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By the end of 1663, the restored English monarchy could afford to be pleased with much of its New England policy. The king had been proclaimed in most of the region, and, more importantly, had granted charters to the strategically important colonies of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Various other interests, from the Atherton Company to the dispossessed settlers of Maine, had reason to hope that they would reap some reward for their continued loyalty to the crown before too long. If Charles and his court had seen New England as a potential source of subversion in 1660, they could now see the region more clearly and recognise that only Massachusetts remained as an intractable problem.

The final section of this study considers the mission dispatched by the English crown to investigate the affairs of New England in 1664, and will look at the activities of the commissioners, and especially their dealings with Massachusetts, in some detail. The work of the four commissioners<sup>1</sup> is important in its own right, in that it represents the first serious attempt by an English government to gain first-hand information about the region, and exert direct influence on colonies rather than issue decrees from London. Equally important here, though, is the light cast by these first agents to New England on the successes and failures of the first generation of agents *from* New England.

The royal commission had two major aims. Charles II wanted to capture New Netherland for his brother, the Duke of York, and also to eliminate the competition the Dutch offered in sea-going trade. This venture offered an

1 Richard Nicolls, George Cartwright, Robert Carr and Samuel Maverick.

opportunity for the activities, laws and boundaries of the nearby New England colonies to be investigated. While one half of the mission was clearly rather more belligerent than the other, they were both part of the wider goal of securing Charles' authority in Europe and the Americas. Equally important, some sections of the Massachusetts leadership were sufficiently nervous about the new king's intentions to wonder if the naval power directed against the Dutch might ultimately be turned on Boston.

Neither Charles nor Clarendon ever planned using force against Massachusetts, although the commissioners themselves were happy to let the more paranoid colonists think the worst in an elaborate game of bluff. There were various reasons for not threatening the Bay colony explicitly, among the most important being that it would almost certainly serve to unite the settlers behind their leadership. If the opposite was to be achieved, and the Bay authorities were revealed to be isolated not only from the rest of the region but from their own people, Clarendon's policy would be successful.

In planning the mission, Clarendon ordered the commissioners to avoid a serious clash with Massachusetts, at least until some victories had been won elsewhere. The proprietors of New Hampshire and Maine were known to be willing to renegotiate their patents, and success there would establish some solid gains for the commissioners before they faced the more difficult proposition presented by the Bay Colony. Later, the commissioners could seek the support of Rhode Island, which was likely to be friendly: Clarendon had written to the colony assuring the settlers that one of the mission's major aims was to secure the new charter boundaries in the Narragansett Country.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Massachusetts would have to be dealt with, but even then Clarendon advised that the approach to the Bay Colony

<sup>1</sup> See Clarendon to Rhode Island, in RIHS Rhode Island Historical Manuscripts, X: 97.



should be careful and diplomatic. If no criticism was aimed at the colony's religious or political activities, argued Clarendon, "the stiff and factious party will want [i.e. lack] pretensions for stirring up the people."<sup>1</sup>

Contact between the commissioners and the Bay leadership was intermittent and characterised by hedging, delaying tactics, thinly veiled threats and misunderstandings (many quite deliberate). Taken together, the actions of the Bay leaders demonstrate that they had learned much from previous transatlantic conflicts, but that the lessons they chose to follow were often very selectively chosen. In particular, attempts by agents such as Peter and Winslow to encourage Massachusetts to place more faith in English governments had no impact, while the stalling of John Leveret immediately after the Restoration was endorsed as a model for dealing with the English authorities.

The commissioners arrived in Boston late in July 1664. In line with their instructions, they fired a preliminary threat across the colony's bows without making any attempt to investigate matters in Massachusetts. Cleverly, they offered Massachusetts a chance to prove its loyalty without having to change its internal practices, by asking that the Bay arrange for troops to be gathered to help with the forthcoming assault on New Amsterdam. The commissioners probably expected Massachusetts to refuse, but they knew that it would be harder for the colony to devise an excuse than if the challenge had been made to, say, cherished principles of church government.

The colony's response set the tone for much of the subsequent contact, in that it was scrupulously polite while being careful to promise nothing concrete. All the Bay leadership would do was call a General Court to discuss the matter the following week. Unimpressed, but hardly surprised, the commissioners dropped the first in

1 CSPC, 1661-68, 198-9.

a series of hints which were to become progressively more explicit as time went on and frustration grew. Massachusetts should pay attention to certain matters raised in previous contact with England, which would be considered by the commissioners upon their return from making the Dutch colony part of King Charles' dominions.<sup>1</sup> This hint of the military capabilities of the commissioners was never far below the surface in such exchanges: later, the commissioners none too subtly mentioned that any who doubted their authority should recall that they had arrived in New England in "three of the king's frigates."<sup>2</sup>

During the commission's absence in New Netherland, Massachusetts embarked on a damage control exercise. The colonial leadership addressed some of the issues raised in correspondence between colony and crown, and one good example of the tactics employed is in their consideration of the freemanship question. English opinion was firmly opposed to the limiting of freemanship to church members, not so much because the practice discriminated against members of other faiths but because it upset the social order. In theory a poor man, a servant even, could be a freeman in Massachusetts and have more political influence than a wealthy and respectable landowner who did not belong to the church.

The Bay's solution was complex, and the colony was keen to give the impression that it was offering as many ways as possible for a man to qualify for freemanship. There would be a new measure of orthodoxy which would require certificates from a recognised- but not necessarily Massachusetts- congregation. Property qualifications were also introduced, but there was still no absolute right to freemanship. The new rules would gain the applicant a hearing, but not necessarily

1 *Mass Rec*, IV part 2, 164.

2 *Mass Rec*, IV part 2, 184.

election.<sup>1</sup>

The new freemanship regulations were intended to satisfy the casual observer, and in earlier decades might have sufficed. Unfortunately for Massachusetts the commissioners were determined to take a closer interest. Once the annexation of New Netherland was complete, sparring with the Bay Colony began in earnest. Commissioner Cartwright investigated the probable effects of the new rules and found that they were calculated to exclude virtually everyone who had been excluded before, albeit for different reasons.<sup>2</sup>

The commissioners consistently tried to isolate the Massachusetts leadership, by securing the support of the other New England colonies, and also- more damaging- by turning parts of Bay society against those in authority. Their first action upon return from New Amsterdam was to insist that Massachusetts call a general assembly of the settlers. Whether they were serious about this is unclear, because it was a rather unreasonable request. The Governor sensibly enough responded that to require attendance might leave outlying settlements undefended. Nonetheless, the commissioners spread word of a general meeting to coincide with the next court of election by writing letters to local leaders. They then turned their attention to Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup>

The commissioners' tactics were subtle. On the one hand they knew that there were elements within the Bay Colony which felt that a more cooperative approach to England would pay dividends for the colony's economic prospects, quite apart from any wish to avoid having direct rule from home forced upon them. The debate over the dispatch of agents Bradstreet and Norton had made these divisions clear, and a number of complainants

1 *Mass Rec*, IV part 2, 167.

2 See Cartwright's "Account of Massachusetts" in *NYHS Collections*, II (1869): 83.

3 *Mass Rec*, IV part 2: 173-4.

against Massachusetts in the early 1660s claimed that the king had many loyal subjects in New England who objected to the antics of the Boston elite. If the commissioners could reach and influence such people, it was possible that the Bay leadership would find their position undermined by dissidents in their own ranks.

Even if this failed, continuous sniping at the colony might force the leadership to make a mistake. The nature of that error did not really matter to the commissioners. If the colony were to give up and cooperate fully with the commission and the English crown, all well and good: if not, it might at least be goaded into outright defiance, which would give the commissioners a chance to brand Endecott and his colleagues traitors. The Bay's greatest weapon was polite obstruction in the form of endless correspondence and debate which deliberately missed the point, and its greatest ally was time. Indeed, observed Cartwright,

they hope to tire the King, the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary too with writing- they can easily spin 7 years out with writing at that distance and before that be ended a change might come. Nay, some have even dared to say, who knows what the event of this Dutch War may be."<sup>1</sup>

The commissioners and the Bay authorities conducted their most extensive negotiations in May 1665, and that summer saw a series of attempts by the colony to delay proceedings and create confusion in England. The most traditional tactic was one familiar to anti-Stuart elements for several decades. The Bay expressed doubts about the authority of the commissioners and suggested that they were acting without the knowledge and approval of the king, in a colonial version of the old fiction of viewing the monarch as a good man surrounded by evil counsellors. The result was that both the Bay leaders and the commissioners invoked the king's name to threaten each other, and thus created a time-consuming impasse. To

<sup>1</sup> See Cartwright's "Account of Massachusetts" in *NYHS Collections*, II (1869): 85-6.



the commissioners, the Bay's answers were "so far from being probable to satisfy the king's expectation, that we fear they will highly offend him." Massachusetts continued to reject the legitimacy of the commissioners' mission, and informed them that they would "not lose more of our labours upon you, but refer it to His Majesty's wisdom."<sup>1</sup>

Governor Endecott continued on this theme in a letter to Charles II after the commissioners had concluded their examination of the Bay's affairs. Endecott's tactics demonstrate an awareness of the fragility of the colony's position, but also a shrewd assessment of England's attitudes to the colonies. It had not escaped Endecott's attention that commissioner Richard Nicholls had remained in the newly annexed New York, while the other three members of the party returned to Massachusetts. Given that one of those three was Samuel Maverick, it was not too far-fetched for Endecott to claim that the mission had been misled about the colony and influenced by its opponents. This was particularly likely, claimed Endecott, because the leader of the mission had been diverted to dealing with the Dutch. Massachusetts would not be

placed upon the sandy foundations of a blind obedience unto that arbitrary, absolute and unlimited power which these gentlemen would impose upon us...contrary to Your Majesty's gracious expressions, and the liberties of Englishmen.<sup>2</sup>

As their agents had consistently portrayed resistance to English intervention as a defence of the charter, so the Bay leadership invoked the rights implicit in that charter in its direct dealings with Charles II.

Perhaps the true source of encouragement which Massachusetts took from Nicolls' absence was that it reflected the relatively low priority attached to the Bay

1 *Mass Rec*, IV part 2: 205, 210-11.

2 *Mass Rec*, IV part 2: 275.

Colony by the commissioners, and by England. Samuel Maverick was interested in Massachusetts, and continued to observe divisions in the colony with satisfaction, but there is evidence that those commissioners who had less personal ties to the colony rapidly found more rewarding activities. Nicholls in particular relished his posting in New York, and had a keen interest in further settlement of New Jersey and the southern colonies. A good example of his thinking is found in a letter to Clarendon which noted the one New England issue to remain important- whether the populace at large might unseat the Bay leadership- before giving much more space to wider colonial issues.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of their mission the commissioners played their final card. Leading figures from the Bay, including Richard Bellingham, William Hathorne and two others chosen by the colony, should come to London to state their case and answer charges against them. This was not a new idea, of course, and mirrored the effort of Archbishop Laud's Council three decades before to recall the Bay Company charter. Nonetheless, circumstances made the prospect even less palatable for the colony leadership of the 1660s, a point of which the commissioners were well aware.

Again, the situation was one in which the Massachusetts elite could hardly win. If they refused to travel, they risked encouraging further intervention from England, and also added to the alienation of sections of their own constituency. On the other hand, if they did leave Massachusetts, they would face the prospect of suffering personally in England, while quite possibly being removed from office by those same disaffected elements in their absence. Once again the colony refused give a firm answer, and while no agents travelled to England, neither did the Bay explicitly refuse to send them.

<sup>1</sup> See Nicolls to Clarendon, 17 April 1666, in *NYHS Collections*, II (1869): 113-120.

The passage of time, long accepted as the greatest ally of Massachusetts, came to the colony's aid. England's priorities once more shifted away from New England, and Commissioner Cartwright's complaint that Massachusetts would "easily spin out 7 years with writing" proved accurate. The fall of Clarendon in 1667 left England struggling to maintain coherent policies, and, as had happened before, the New England question moved into the background.

This is not the place for a detailed examination of colonial administration in the final twenty years of Stuart rule, but it must be noted that Massachusetts society in the later 1660s had a different view of the transatlantic relationship from that held three decades before. Important elements in Massachusetts recognised the potential of the colony as a trading centre, and gradually forced the Bay into the mainstream of the English Atlantic economy. In so doing, they demonstrated to the older leadership what had long been clear to settlers in Rhode Island. England required relatively little from the colonies beyond formal assurances of their loyalty, and such commitments would not inevitably lead to interference in colonial affairs. England could even be of considerable help to a colony, if that was in the interests of stability in general.

This shift in outlook was not, however, entirely due to the seven years of Clarendon's administration. The royal commission did not create divisions in colonial society, but rather helped to polarise disagreements which had already existed for some time. Commissioner Maverick was much heartened by the 1665 petition, signed by more than one hundred Bay colonists, which urged full obedience to the crown.<sup>1</sup> Much of the support for this move came from towns outside Boston, most notably Salem and Hingham, and Maverick knew better than anyone that the

<sup>1</sup> See Maverick to Clarendon, [n.d. 1665?], in *NYHS Collections*, II (1869): 126-129; also the petition itself in the same volume, 132-134.

emergence of a legitimate opposition, especially with strong localist roots, could rapidly undermine the older elite. The commission could not persuade the Bay authorities to declare their unconditional subjection to Charles II, but it did help to encourage a climate in which compromise seemed pragmatic rather than treacherous.

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Clarendon's central colonial policy was a calculated effort to consolidate London's authority in the region, not so that day-to-day matters could be dealt with in England, but so that colonial resources, whether counted in economic or political terms, could be included in the calculations of English governments. Clarendon had learned from experience to secure support from as wide a range of sources as possible in case of future crises. Rhode Island and Connecticut recognised that they could benefit from supporting this policy, and the success of their agents in the early 1660s was an important step in the development of a mutually constructive transatlantic relationship.



### Conclusions: Lessons from the First Generation

The political landscape of southern New England in the mid-1660s owes much of its form to colonial agents. Their activities in London in the first years of the Restoration were the culmination of two decades of lobbying which gave diverse settlements a common constitutional basis from which to defend their interests against external threats. Agents' successes also provided colonial leaders with the authority and legitimacy needed to create administrative structures within which religious, political and local factions could coexist. Less directly, the dispatch of agents forced colonies to reassess their attitudes toward England from time to time, and develop their fiscal and administrative mechanisms in order that their concerns might be aired in London. Agency missions were not the sole reason for the formalisation of colonial government, but in some instances-particularly in Rhode Island-the needs of an agent gave a clear impetus for reform.

By far the most important legacy of New England's first agents is the survival of Rhode Island. Roger Williams established the claims of the Narragansett Bay settlers in his 1644 patent and successive agents defended them through the 1640s and 1650s, before having them confirmed by John Clarke's charter in 1663. The United Colonies continued to resent the presence of their unorthodox neighbours, but were forced to recognise the authority behind the new charter. As early as the autumn of 1663, Massachusetts was sending emissaries to deal with Rhode Island's General Court almost on equal terms;

two decades previously the Bay would have been more likely to send troops.<sup>1</sup> After the charter was acquired, noted Roger Williams, "the country about us was more friendly and wrote to us and treated us as an authorised colony".<sup>2</sup>

Rhode Island's territory was never fundamentally altered after the grant of the charter, although squabbles over the region's boundaries continued into the eighteenth century, and minor adjustments were still being negotiated almost two hundred years after 1663. Indeed, part of the reason for the 1862 debate in the Massachusetts Historical Society over the Narragansett patents, which was considered in Chapter 6, was that the issue had some topicality. 1862 saw the final exchange of territory between Massachusetts and Rhode Island, when boundaries were redrawn in the Fall River area.

If Rhode Island is the success story of the first generation, its achievements stand in marked contrast to the failure of New Haven to resist annexation by Connecticut. There are a number of factors common to both cases, not least of which was the involvement of Connecticut agent John Winthrop, jr. Winthrop's action against New Haven was part of a more ambitious attempt to incorporate much of southern New England into a greater Connecticut. A large part of the reason for Winthrop's success with New Haven and failure with Rhode Island stems from the latter colony's recognition, many years before, of the value of agents in London. New Haven, lacking experience of the benefits of a close link to English authority, suffered accordingly.

The first generation agents encountered considerable change in the attitudes of colonial administrators, but

1 On 20 October 1663, the Massachusetts General Court ordered Eleazer Lusher and John Leveret to Rhode Island to discuss territorial questions. See Mass Archives 2: 42.

2 Williams to Major John Mason and Governor Thomas Prince, 22 June 1670, in LaFantasie, *Correspondence*, 612.

also a surprising degree of continuity. One theme which runs throughout is that England's leaders, even when sitting on colonial committees, always put domestic concerns before those of the colonies. This is hardly surprising, but it is noteworthy that even those individuals who had personal interests in the New England colonies refrained from indulging them when there were wider issues at stake. The Warwick Commission of the 1640s might have tried to force a more aristocratic leadership on Massachusetts following failed attempts at persuasion in the previous decade, but rather followed the more general tendency of the Long Parliament to follow available precedents and interfere as little as possible in long-standing legal entities like the colonial companies.

The two regimes which showed an inclination to intervene in New England also did so for sound reasons of domestic policy rather than from a desire to control the routine governance of the colonies. It is no coincidence that the Commonwealth of 1649-53 and the restored monarchy were the two administrations in this period with the most urgent need to establish their authority in England. Securing pledges of allegiance from different factions in Rhode Island offered the republican Council of State some measure of security in the northern settlements, and was certainly a far cheaper option than the naval expedition which had to be sent to persuade the southern and island colonies to recognise the new regime. A decade later, Charles II and Clarendon managed to secure the support of most of the American colonies without much effort, and successfully isolated Massachusetts by the judicious granting of favours to the smaller New England colonies. While the loyalty of any number of colonies would not have saved a regime facing serious opposition in England, the image of a government receiving the allegiance of far-flung dominions was a powerful one, and contributed to the much needed aura of authority.

The most pronounced element of continuity experienced by agents was the relative unimportance of New England as a region. This should have come as no surprise to the colonial leadership, but agents found a strange inconsistency in English attitudes. Religious controversies in the 1640s often had a New England element, with agents playing a full part in debates and with the region's practices being dissected by opponents and supporters alike. Such interest did not extend to the majority of colonial administrators, though, and the Warwick Commission refused to become entangled in sectarian squabbles between Gortonists, Remonstrants and the authorities in Massachusetts. Large issues, such as charter rights and colonial boundaries were readily considered by England's leaders, but the minute religious controversies so dear to New Englanders were of little consequence to those in office.

The reception accorded to agents in England reveals one further lesson. Massachusetts survived a severe crisis of confidence, both economic and spiritual, in the early 1640s, and survived in part by devising a mission for itself. Conversion of the Indians was an important part of the Bay's effort to persuade England and itself that it had a good reason for remaining in America, but in reality the existence of the colony became its own justification. The first generation invested considerable time, effort and resources to establishing the colony, and took itself very seriously as a result. England failed to give the Bay leadership the respect it sought, and what might have been considered reasonable involvement in any other situation was seen as unwarranted interference by Massachusetts.

Agents like Edward Winslow recognised this gap in perceptions, and it is perhaps the greatest failure of the Massachusetts agents that they were unable to reduce the paranoia of their colonial masters. That failure was hardly their fault, however, and Peter, Winslow, Bradstreet and Norton all deserve some credit for their

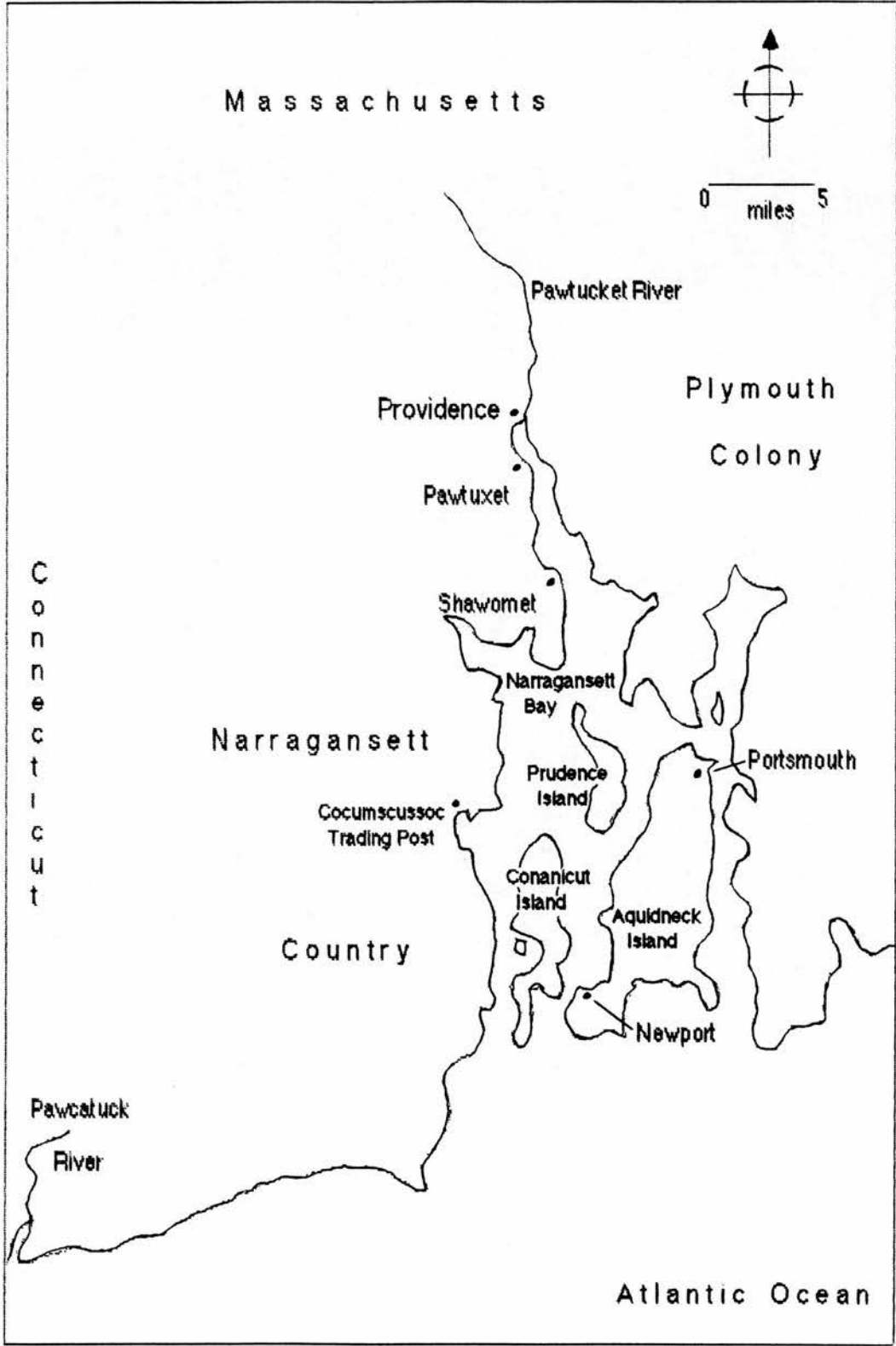


efforts to smooth some obstacles to transatlantic understanding.

It was in the longer term unfortunate that England gave the northern colonies such a low priority during the 1640s and 1650s. The Massachusetts leaders misinterpreted England's attitude during this period as a successful result of their policy of non-cooperation, rather than as a lack of interest on the part of England. On the occasions when England did intervene, during the Commonwealth and early restoration, it came as a surprise to the Bay, which proceeded to blame its agents for attracting unwelcome attention. If Massachusetts had not overestimated its own importance, relations with England would have been smoother. England was happy with recognition and formal allegiance, and had neither the resources nor the inclination to interfere in a group of colonies which offered little economic benefit.

New England's first generation agents played a vital role in the formative decades of the English Atlantic. They established precedents for transatlantic communication which remained in place throughout the colonial period, and scored some notable successes through their persistence and pragmatism. They also demonstrated that having an agent in London was no panacea: agents could not fundamentally alter the perceptions held by colonies and colonial administrators. It was this gulf in understanding, symbolised but not caused by the separating ocean, which led to a gradual alienation.

Appendix 1: Settlements Around Narragansett Bay, c.1650.



Based on map of Rhode Island 1636-1659, in John H. Cady, *Rhode Island Boundaries 1636-1936*, Providence, RI 1936

## Appendix 2: The Warwick Commission, 1643-1648.

### Membership.

Appointed by original ordinance, 2 November 1643:

Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick; Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery; Edward Montague, Earl of Manchester; William Fiennes, Viscount Saye and Sele; Phillip Lord Wharton; John Lord Roberts; Sir Gilbert Gerard; Sir Arthur Haselrig; Sir Henry Vane, jr.; Sir Benjamin Rudyard; John Pym; Oliver Cromwell; Denis Bond; Miles Corbet; Cornelius Holland; Samuel Vassall; John Rolles; William Spurstowe. (See *Lords Journals* VI: 291-2).

Oliver St. John (replaced John Pym, who died 8 December 1643) appointed August 26 1644. (See *Commons Journals* III: 607).

Extension of Commission, 14 March 1646:

Algernon Percy, Earl of Northumberland; Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham; Basil Fielding, Earl of Denbigh; Francis Lennard, Baron Dacre; Lord Bruce, Lord Sarum; Alexander Rigby (replaced William Spurstowe, who died January 1646), Sir John Clotworthy, George Fenwick, Richard Salway, William Purefoy, Francis Allen, John Ash, Edmund Prideaux, Sir Henry Mildmay, John Glyn, George Snelling, Sir Phillip Stapleton, Sir William Waller. (See *Commons Journals* IV: 476; *Lords Journals* VIII: 209).

New England documents issued by the Warwick Commission.  
See table overleaf.

- a) Thomas Weld's Narragansett Patent, 10 December 1643. (*New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 9 (1857): 41-3).
- b) Roger Williams' Narragansett Patent, 14 March 1644. (*RI Rec* I: 143-6).
- c) Safe-conduct pass to Samuel Gorton, 15 May 1646. (*Winthrop, Journal* II: 282-3).
- d) Letter issued to Samuel Gorton, 15 May 1646. (*Winthrop, Journal* II: 292-3).
- e) Letter issued to Edward Winslow, 25 May 1647. (*Winthrop, Journal* II: 336-8).
- f) Final judgement in Gorton/Winslow case, 22 July 1647. (*Winthrop, Journal* II: 335-6).
- g) Letter to New Haven Colony, June 1648. (*NH Rec* II: 520).

Signatures on Warwick Commission Documents.

	10 Dec 1643	14 Mar 1644	15 May 1646	15 May 1646	25 May 1647	22 Jul 1647	June 1648
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
Warwick	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Spurstowe	•	•					
Roberts	•						
Wharton		•					
Holland		•	•	•	•	•	
Vassall	•	•	•	•			
Pembroke		•		•		•	•
Rudyard	•			•			
Bond	•			•			
Manchester	•			•	•	•	•
Saye		•			•		•
Heselrig	•	•			•	•	
Corbet	•	•			•	•	
Rolle		•				•	
Vane		•		•			
Cromwell							
Pym							
Gerard							
Nottingham			•	•			
Dacre			•	•	•		•
Rigby			•				
Fenwick			•		•	•	
Allen			•		•		
Purefoy			•	•	•	•	
Snelling			•	•		•	
Northumberland				•			
Waller				•	•		
Denbigh					•		•
Mildmay						•	
Salway						•	
Clotworthy							
Ash							
Prideaux							
Glynn							
Stapleton							
Sarum							
Bruce							

- Signature appears on the document of the given date.



Appendix 3: Council of State Committees, 1650-1652.

Members involved in New England petitions.

Admiralty Committee (figure i).

Denis Bond; Thomas Challoner; Thomas, Lord Grey; John Lisle; William Purefoy; William Cecil, Earl of Salisbury; Anthony Stapely; Sir Henry Vane, jr; Valentine Walton.

Minute-books for the Committee are in PRO, SP25/123

Foreign Affairs Committee (figure ii).

Denis Bond; John Bradshaw; Abraham Burrell; Thomas Challoner; Sir William Constable; Charles Fleetwood; John Gurdon; Sir James Harrington; William Hay; Sir Arthur Haselrig; Cornelius Holland; John Lisle; Nicholas Love; Henry Marten; Sir William Masham; Herbert Morley; Henry Neville; Isaac Pennington; William Purefoy; Richard Salway; Thomas Scott; Sir Henry Vane, jr.; Valentine Walton; Bulstrode Whitelock.

Minute-books for the Committee are in PRO, SP25/131

	14	15	16	18	19	20	22	23	25	26	27	28	29	2	3	4	5	6	9	11
Bond															.					
Challoner		.	.		.		.							.		.	.	.		
Grey					.		.		.	.				.			.		.	
Lisle																				.
Purefoy	.	.																		
Salisbury				.									.		.	.				.
Stapely	.	.						.		.	.									
Vane	.	.	.	.	.	.		.	.	.	.	.	.		.	.	.	.	.	.
Walton	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

i. Attendance at Admiralty Committee meetings, 14 March- 11 April 1650.

**BOLD** type indicates meeting at which New England business discussed.

	May 5	June 28	June 11	July 16	July 14	21	28	30	Aug 26	Sep 1	8	10	13	27	29	Oct 1
Bond	•	•	•	•	•		•	•								
Bradshaw	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Burrell					•											
Challoner	•	•	•					•			•				•	•
Constable					•											
Corbet																•
Fleetwood	•							•								
Gurdon																
Harrington												•			•	
Hayes						•					•	•	•			*
Haselrig	•	•	•	•	•											
Holland		•	•	•											•	
Lisle								•	•						•	•
Love					•				•	•						
Marten	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•			
Masham			•	•					•					•		•
Morley	•					•					•	•	•	•		•
Neville	•	•		•	•			•		•	•				•	•
Pennington	•		•	•		•	•			•	•				•	•
Purefoy			•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•			•
Salway					•											
Scott			•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•
Vane		•	•	•								•	•	•	•	•
Walton				•												
Whitelocke			•	•			•	•								

ii. Foreign Affairs Committee, 5 May to 1 October 1652: meetings dealing with the American colonies. **Bold** type indicates New England business.

#### Appendix 4: The Agents.

The biographical notes which follow are arranged in a common format:

Agent's name.

Dates of active agency and community/colony represented.

Date and place of birth.

Date and place of death.

Education; occupation.

Contact with New England colonisation enterprises before migration.

Date and place of initial arrival in New England; age at migration.

Office-holding and other activities in colonies, before and after mission.

Date of agency commission; date and place of departure from New England; date of arrival in England; date of departure from England; date of return to New England.

Sources; entries in standard biographical dictionaries, individual biographies.

Abbreviations used in this section are:

b.	born
BDBR	Richard L. Greaves, ed., <i>Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century</i> , 3 vols, Brighton, England 1982.
d.	died
DAB	<i>Dictionary of American Biography</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>

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Simon Bradstreet.

Agent for Massachusetts, 1662.

b. March 1603. Horbing, Lincolnshire, England.

d. 27 March 1697. Ipswich, Massachusetts.

Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Steward to Earl of Lincoln, and later to Countess of Warwick.

Married daughter of Thomas Dudley, went to Cambridge University as Governor to son of Earl of Warwick.

Sailed to New England with Winthrop in 1630; aged 27.

Assistant in Massachusetts Bay Company, 1629. Founding Commissioner of United Colonies; held that office for 33 years. Leading figure in Essex County, Massachusetts. House of Deputies' choice as agent in 1661.

Member of Atherton Company, speculated in land in Narragansett region.



Commissioned early 1662; sailed 11 February 1662; at London 24 March 1662; returned to Massachusetts, 3 September 1662.

DAB; DNB (Brief note under Bradstreet, Anne).

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John Clarke.

Agent for Aquidneck 1651-1660, re-commissioned agent for Rhode Island Colony 1660.

b. 8 October 1609. Westhorpe, Suffolk, England.

d. 20 April 1676. Newport, Rhode Island.

Physician/Baptist preacher.

Possibly studied medicine at University of Leyden.

Arrived Boston November 1637; aged 28.

Played no active part in Antinomian dispute but left Massachusetts with members of that group, going first to Exeter, New Hampshire, then arriving in Portsmouth, Aquidneck by spring 1638. Signed Aquidneck Compact 7 March 1638. Moved south to Newport as part of Coddington faction April 1639. Founder of and preacher to First Baptist Church, Newport 1644. Assistant at first Rhode Island General Assembly; Treasurer 1649, 1650.

Arrested while preaching in Massachusetts, 20 July 1651; fined. Agent for the anti-Coddington faction in the towns of Newport and Portsmouth, November 1651; stayed in England as agent for whole colony until acquisition of charter in July 1663.

After 1663, regularly elected to colonial assembly; deputy governor in 1671.

Commissioned 15 Oct 1651, sailed November.

Second Commission dated 18 Oct 1660 while still in England, returned to Rhode Island summer 1664.

DAB; BDBR; Thomas W. Bicknell, *The Story of John Clarke, the Founder of the First Free Commonwealth in the History of the World on the Basis of "Full Liberty in Religious Concernments."* Providence, RI 1915; Richard Greaves, "A Colonial Fifth Monarchist? John Clarke of Rhode Island." *Rhode Island History* 40 (1981): 40-47; Henry M. King, *Early Baptists Defended*. Boston 1880.

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Samuel Gorton.

Agent for settlement of Shawomet, 1644-1648.

b. 1592. Gorton, Lancashire.

d. 1677. Shawomet, Rhode Island.

Clothier/radical preacher.

Arrived Boston March 1637; aged 45.

Moved almost immediately to Plymouth. Jailed after

challenging authority of minister, Ralph Smith. Moved to Portsmouth, Aquidneck; publicly whipped for refusing to recognise government of William Coddington. At centre of November 1641 dispute between Providence and Pawtuxet; purchased Shawomet (later Warwick) from Indians, January 1642. Along with followers, kidnapped, tried, imprisoned and ultimately banished by Massachusetts.

After receiving guarantees from England about safety of settlement, returned to Shawomet and spent his remaining years representing the settlement in the General Court of Rhode Island Colony and leading his religious sect.

Sailed from New Amsterdam in summer of 1644; returned to Rhode Island by summer 1648.

DAB; DNB; Kenneth W. Porter, "Samuell Gorton: New England Firebrand." *NEQ* 7 (1934): 405-444; Philip F. Gura, "The Radical Ideology of Samuel Gorton: New Light on the Relation of English to American Puritanism." *WMQ* (1979): 78-100; Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660*, (1984), Chapter 10.

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John Greene.

Agent for settlement of Shawomet, 1644-1648.

b. 1597. Salisbury, England.

d. 1658. Shawomet, Rhode Island.

Surgeon.

Arrived Salem, Massachusetts June 1635; aged 38.

Moved in summer 1636 to Providence, then to Shawomet in 1643 as follower of Gorton. Avoided capture by Massachusetts in 1642, keeping Gortonists together until return of leaders from imprisonment.

Mission dates as for Samuel Gorton.

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William Hibbins.

Agent for Massachusetts, 1641-42.

b. Unknown.

d. 23 July 1654. Boston, Massachusetts.

Merchant, owner of leatherworks.

Arrived in Boston 1638.

Boston Selectman December 1639, colony freeman May 1640.

Messenger from Boston church to Aquidneck, February/March 1639.

Left Massachusetts 3 August 1641, returned in September 1642.

DAB (brief note under Hibbins, Ann)

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Randall Holden.

Agent for the settlement of Shawomet, 1645-6.

b. 1612. Salisbury, England.

d. 23 August 1692. Shawomet, Rhode Island.

Arrived Boston 1637; aged 25.

In Portsmouth, Aquidneck by 1638, where he joined Gorton faction. Imprisoned with Gorton by Massachusetts in 1642.

Mission dates as for Samuel Gorton, but returned in September 1646, presenting safe conduct pass to Massachusetts authorities.

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John Leveret.

Agent for Massachusetts, 1655-61.

b. 1616 (baptised 7 July). Boston, Lincolnshire, England

d. 16 March 1679. Boston, Massachusetts.

Merchant/soldier.

Arrived in Massachusetts in 1633, aged 17.

Freeman in 1640. Involved in Indian fighting in early 1640s before returning to England to take a commission in Rainsborough's Regiment, Parliamentary Army. Returned to New England 1648, elected to the General Court 1651-53.

Part of fact-finding mission to the Dutch, May 1653. Joint leader of mission planned to attack New Amsterdam in 1653-54.

Returned to NE in 1662 with free transit pass and royal pardon. Elected to General Court 1663-5, Member of Council 1665-70, Deputy Governor 1671-3, Governor 1673-9. Major General of Massachusetts militia 1663-73.

Commissioned 23 November 1655, sailed beginning December; arrived back in Massachusetts 19 July 1662.

DAB; Charles E. Leverett, *A Memoir, Biographical and Genealogical, of Sir John Leverett, Knt., Governor of Massachusetts 1673-9*. Boston, 1856.

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John Norton.

Agent for Massachusetts 1662.

b. 6 May 1606. Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, England.

d. 5 April 1663. Boston, Massachusetts.

Peterhouse College, Cambridge. Minister.  
Succeeded Roger Williams as chaplain to Sir William Masham in 1620s.  
Came to New England with Edward Winslow, who hoped to recruit him for Plymouth, in 1635; aged 29.  
Ordained Ipswich 1636. Considered as agent along with John Winthrop 1646. Active part in drawing up Cambridge Platform 1648. Planned to return to England in the 1650s, but instead moved to the Boston church in 1656.  
Overseer of Harvard College 1654. Prominent in the persecution of Quakers in Massachusetts in the 1650s.

Mission dates as for Simon Bradstreet.

DNB; Arthur B. Ellis, *History of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1680*. Boston 1881.

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Hugh Peter.  
Agent for Massachusetts 1641-45.

b. 27 April 1598. Fowey, Cornwall.  
d. 16 October 1660. London, England.

Trinity College, Cambridge. Minister.  
Travelled widely to preach in early years in England before going to Holland, 1628. Minister to English Reformed Church, Rotterdam, 1629-35.  
Arrived Salem, Massachusetts in 1635, aged 37.  
Army chaplain in Ireland 1642, agent to raise funds for Parliament in Holland 1643. Prominent clerical supporter of political actions of Cromwell and the New Model Army; executed after Restoration for his part in the trial and execution of Charles I.

Left Massachusetts 3 August 1641, did not return to New England

DAB; DNB (Under Peters); BDBR; Raymond P. Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peter 1598-1660*. Urbana, IL 1954; Ronald W. Pacy, "Spiritual Combat: The Life and Personality of Hugh Peters, a Puritan Minister." PhD thesis, State University of New York, Buffalo 1978.

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William Vassall.  
Agent for Massachusetts Remonstrant faction, 1647.

b. c. 1593.  
d. 1655. Barbados.

Sailed to New England June 1635, aged 42.  
Assistant to Massachusetts Bay Company 1629. Settled Roxbury, then moved to Scituate, Plymouth Colony.



Sailed to England November 1646; after unsuccessful appeal to authorities went to West Indies.

DAB (note under Vassal, John); DNB (under Vassal, John).

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Thomas Weld.

Agent for Massachusetts, 1641-45.

b. 1595. Sudbury, Suffolk, England.

d. 1661. Gateshead, England.

Trinity College, Cambridge. Minister.

Minister to congregations at Haverhill, Suffolk, and Terling, Essex, before being deprived in November 1631 for nonconformity.

Arrived Boston, Massachusetts, 5 June 1632, aged 37.

Minister at Roxbury from July 1632. Served as Anne Hutchinson's gaoler.

Established minister at St. Mary's, Gateshead in 1650.

Mission dates as for Hugh Peter

DAB; DNB; BDBR; Roger Howell, "Thomas Weld of Gateshead: The Return of a New England Puritan." *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4th series 48 (1970): 303-331.

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Roger Williams.

Agent for Providence 1643-44; for Providence and Warwick, 1651-53.

b. 1603 London.

d. Between 16 January-15 March 1683, Providence, Rhode Island.

Pembroke College, Cambridge. Minister.

Chaplain to Sir William Masham, 1628.

Arrived Boston February 1631, aged c. 27.

Offered teachership by Boston church, but became teacher to Salem congregation 1631; increasingly controversial separatism led him to Plymouth; returned to Salem 1633; banished from Massachusetts and founded Providence, 1636.

Chief officer Rhode Island colony 1644-7, 1654-7.

Left Rhode Island June or July 1643; returned 17 September 1644; left November 1651; returned Boston early summer 1654.

DAB; DNB; BDBR; James Ernst, "Roger Williams and the English Revolution." *RIHS Collections* 24 (1931): 1-58; Samuel H. Brockunier, *The Irrepressible Democrat: Roger Williams*, (1940); Edmund S. Morgan, *Roger Williams, the Church and the State*, (1967).

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Edward Winslow.  
Agent for Massachusetts, 1646-55.

b. 18 October 1595. Droitwich, Worcestershire, England.  
d. 8 May 1655. At sea in Caribbean.

King's School, Worcester. Printer.  
Moved to London as apprentice c.1613. At Leyden 1617.  
Sailed to New Plymouth on the Mayflower 1620, aged 25.  
Frequently travelled to England on Plymouth business;  
1623-4, 1630-31, 1634-6. 1623 sent to purchase cattle,  
1624 to cover-up allegations of maltreatment of the  
Indians. Secured land grant from New England Council in  
1630, and defended colony before Privy Council. Similar  
mission in 1634 resulted in imprisonment on orders of  
Laud.

Plymouth colony assistant from 1624-46, governor in  
1633, 1636, 1644. When in England, member of Committee  
for Compounding under Commonwealth, Cromwell's  
Commissioner to assess losses in Anglo-Dutch War,  
Commissioner to expedition to the West Indies 1655.

Left Boston December 1646; did not return to New England

DAB; DNB; George F. Willison, *Saints and Strangers*,  
(1946); William S. Cooper, *Edward Winslow*, (1953).

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John Winthrop, jr.  
Agent for Connecticut, 1662-63.

b. 12 February 1606. Groton, Suffolk, England.  
d. 5 April 1676. Boston, Massachusetts.

Trinity College, Dublin. Entrepreneur.  
Arrived Boston November 1631, aged 25.  
Travelled widely in New England surveying for minerals  
and land, returned to England 1634-5, 1641-3.  
Founded Pequot settlement 1645, lived in New Haven,  
1656-7, moved to Hartford 1657. practiced widely as self-  
taught physician.  
Assistant in Massachusetts Bay, 1632-50; Freeman in  
Connecticut 1650; Magistrate in Connecticut 1651-7;  
Governor of Connecticut 1657-8, 1659-76.

Sailed from New Amsterdam 13 July 1661, reached London  
18 September; left London April or May 1663, arrived  
Connecticut June.

DAB; DNB; Richard S. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees: The  
Winthrop Dynasty of New England, 1630-1717*, (1962);  
Robert C. Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, (1966).

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